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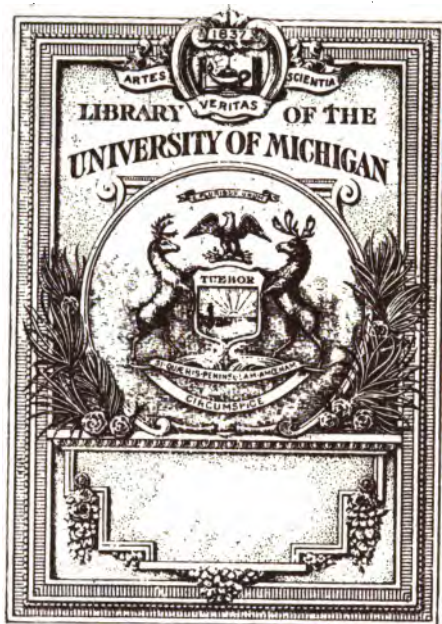
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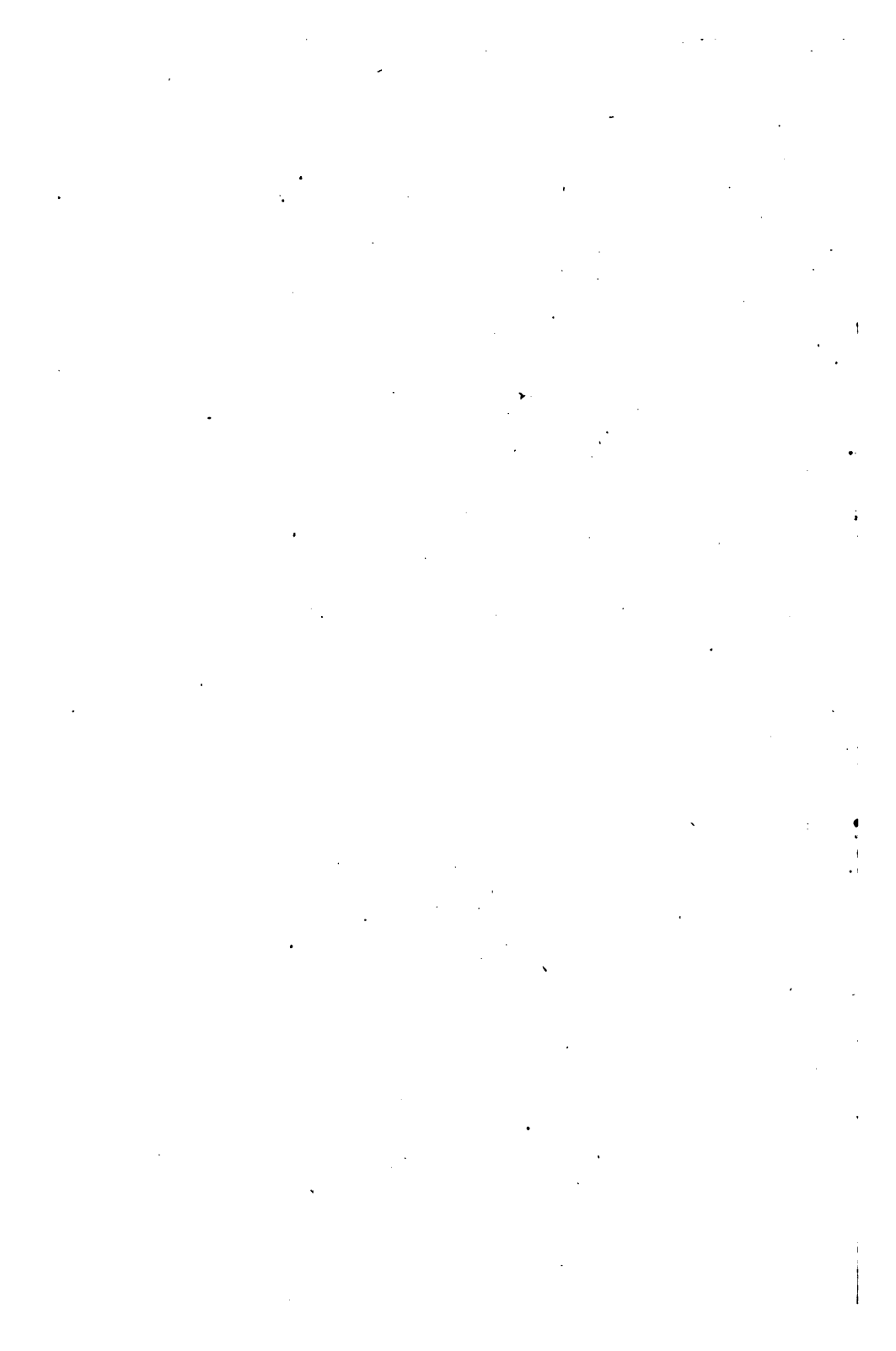
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THE EVOLUTION OF A THEOLOGIAN



BY
STEPHEN K. SZYMANOWSKI
Author of "The Searchers"

"Vitam impendere vero."



BOSTON
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1913



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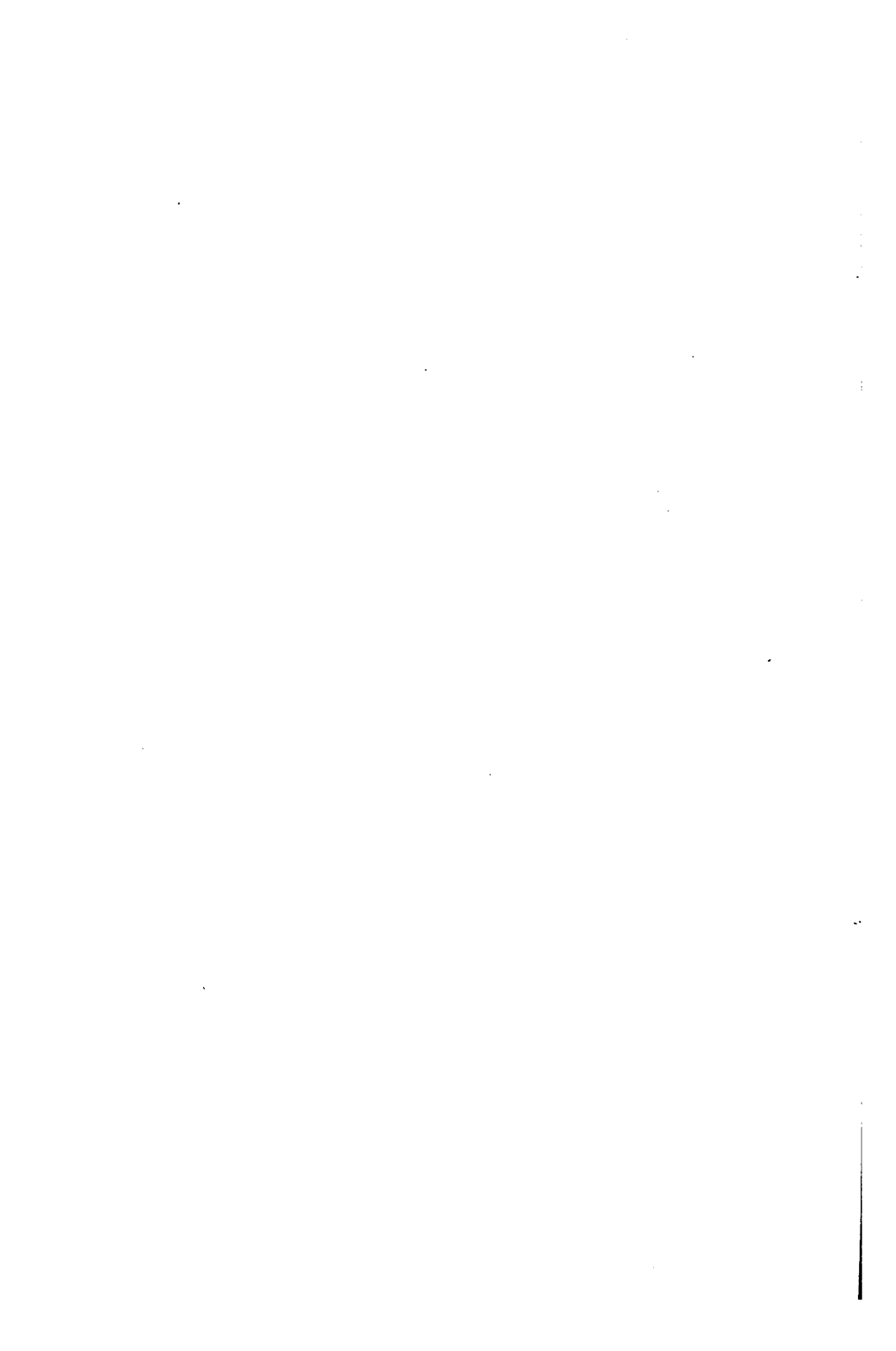
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CHAPTER I

THE AWAKENING

In a spacious study at his home on the public highway originally known as Calle de Las Flores when the City of Los Angeles was in its infancy under Mexican rule, and now known as Flower Street, sat the Reverend William Stuart, D.D., absorbed in reading.

The rectory inhabited by Dr. Stuart was built in mission style and had two stories. The ground floor was divided into two parts by a wide hall running through it. On the northern side was the parlor, which was furnished with exquisite taste, and although it had an inviting and pleasing appearance, it was stamped with that official severity which is found in the homes of divines belonging to the old school. Next to the parlor and separated from it by sliding doors was the modest dining room. On the south side of the house was located the largest room, and this was fitted for the library, which served as a study for the rector. In this room Dr. Stuart spent most of his time, for all his enjoyments and thoughts were centered here. The two large windows, one on the front facing the east and the other on the south side of the house, admitted an abundance of bright California sunshine, which made the room exceedingly cheerful during the day. To one who wished to know the rector's inner self, it was sufficient to gaze attentively on the interior of this room. Every

article found there told the story of the man for whose use it was put there. On one side of the study the whole partition wall was covered with simple but substantial shelves made of eucalyptus wood, which were crowded with books of different sizes and bindings. The absence of dust and a certain carelessness in keeping the books on a straight line with the edge of the shelves, indicated that they were in constant use. They were classified with the care and system of an accomplished scholar. All branches of science were fairly well represented, but above all those of ecclesiastical literature exceeded in number. Rare works like those of Origen surnamed Adamantius, Cyril, Basil, Chrysostom, Eusebius, Gregory Nazienzen and Theodoret, occupied a prominent place. Next to them came fragments of Eunapius, Olympiodorus, Priscus, Candidus, Malchus, and Hesychius of Miletus, some of them in English translation and the rest in original Greek. On the shelf below, and next to the historical works of Zosimus and an ecclesiastical history of Socrates, following the writings of Tertullian, Orosius, and Anastasius, were Latin classics and the rest of the fathers of the church. Commentaries, including the great works of Cornelius à Lapide, were in abundance. Side by side stood the English writers, beginning with the works of the Venerable Bede and Alfred the Great, the founder of English literature, and ending with the most recent publications on church history, dogmatics, and discipline. The whole collection was so scrupulously compiled that even the book of a few years ago entitled "Was St. Peter ever in Rome?" was there. The lower sections contained a number of drawers, and these were filled with manuscripts, charts, maps, and old engravings. On

the opposite side of the room, and between the windows, there were several old pictures hanging on the wall, representing some episodes of church history in England. Near the front window stood a good-sized flat desk on which were a few writing materials and several books and periodicals evidently for immediate use. Several other volumes were thrown on the floor and those of larger size were leaning against the sides of the desk. There was only one chair in this room, and that was occupied by the studious rector. The absence of more chairs unmistakably indicated that Dr. Stuart was not in the habit of receiving visitors in his study.

The book which at this moment held the entire attention of the rector was the work of a distinguished theologian of the Anglican church, who in a series of essays was eloquently exposing the fallacy of the modern churchman progressist. This subject interested Dr. Stuart intensely, for he was in accord with the author, inasmuch as the principles advanced by him were identical with his own, and in his opinion unquestionably were correct. How could it be otherwise? Was it not an established and undeniable fact that the Christian church alone was the only institution of God? Was it not a fact that only through the instrumentality of this institution, the will of God, His commandments, and His holy teachings, were and continue to be promulgated and maintained? How could a sinful mortal attempt exploiting the unfathomed and ineffable wisdom of God without the help and guidance of the church? Modernists who are trying to please a clique of pseudo-scientists evidently have lost their heads and are fast whirling towards losing their faith and their souls.

Why please a scientist? Why this humiliating attitude of attempting to reconcile the ephemeral modernism which is parading under the mask of scientific discoveries with the teachings and traditions of old? Is it not an undisputed fact that the lack of stability always has been and still remains the main characteristic of all scientific creeds? Is it not for this very reason that a set of men subject to a frivolous vanity are continually plunging into the unknown in order to satisfy their shallow curiosity? What do they gain by it? Nothing whatever. They pass into oblivion one after another like clouds on the horizon, leaving no trace of anything that can stand the ravages of tempestuous times; while the vivifying rays of the institution of God shine century after century, warming and enlivening the desolated and broken hearts of mankind. Christian simplicity and humility, its piety, erudition, and deep wisdom, have built a foundation which cannot be shaken by the imitators of the infamous Celsus, the sarcastic and virulent philosopher of old, who, although forgotten long ago, stands a vivid rebuke to the modern Goliaths of shameful doctrines.

These and other similar cogitations were crowding the brain of the rector freely, for after every sentence he read in the book before him he gave way to his own thoughts, which, as they progressed, were crystallized in the above given views. In thus following the train of his reflections, he experienced a pleasure that was as intense as it was invigorating to his candid but severely tried soul. The education and the careful training that he had received in his younger days had given him a lasting basis upon which he constantly and faithfully built his labors. He was taught the ethics of logic,

and he remained firm in his desire to be always logical and consistent with the original principles of his creed. But as he advanced in age and grew in experience, he was compelled to face complications which forcibly required a modification of his code of logic. This irritated him greatly, for he could not agree with the idea that a fish could be anything else but a fish. A truth, if it were a truth, must necessarily remain a truth forever. A truth which was conditional was not a truth. A truth which could not stand by its own merit and command submission, a truth which required explanations and commentaries in order to be recognized and accepted as a truth, was not and could not be a truth; it was a lie—a shameful and debasing lie.

Having formulated his views in this way, he could not refuse his attention to the aggressive modernists of our day. According to his opinion, the methods adopted by them were as inconsistent as they were dangerous. They despoiled religion of its absolute authority to pronounce and define eternal truths, by regulating their opinions under the false mask of worldly prudence in such a way as to harmonize with the views advanced by men of science. In doing this they lost irrevocably the stability of the former, gaining nothing from the latter. He could not help noticing that this system of conciliatory diplomacy between religion and science, introduced and preached by the modern clergy, was gradually assuming frightful dimensions, spreading its dangerous doctrines among high and low. Owing to this it became a matter of fact and of daily occurrence to hear from Christian pulpits opinions strongly tinged with modern ideas. In the days of old, no one ever doubted the authority of the Bible. Today the mod-

ernists succeed in putting the old Writ in the dark corners of their temples. They are addressing their hearers in a language that is profane to the old Book, teaching the masses things fashionable; and when some of the members of a given congregation refuse to agree with the views of the modern pastor, the latter delivers a bombastic sermon with the following remark: "There are men here who actually belong to an age five hundred years ago, before Bacon revolutionized the world with his new philosophy of thinking." * The learned pastor forgets that the religion he is expected to teach belongs to an age of nearly two thousand years ago; nay, more than that, it represents truths that are eternal, belonging as much to the great past as to the future. Oh, what a disgrace!

These were views which Dr. Stuart, wishing to be consistent with the old teachings, had to profess, or rather they were forced upon him by existing conditions. Now and then, when alone, and in a contemplative mood, he would start his musing: "Why should there be so many divisions and dissensions amongst Christians? Why all these different creeds and beliefs? There is only one God, one Creator, one Redeemer, one Baptism, one truth; why then these differences amongst the children of one Father?" This would invariably depress his spirits, and sadness would overshadow his countenance. Then he would run to the shelves of his library in search of some particular father of the church, frequently choosing "Confessions" of Augustine or the "Duties of Ministers" by Ambrose, and bury his thoughts in the pages of the opened book until, overcome with exhaustion, he was forced to retire to his

* Authentic.

room. Naturally intellectual and with a persistent desire to know more, he spent most of his time in meditation upon the mysteries of life, drawing such light, help, and consolation from the old sources as he could get from the fathers of the church. But living in a time when human progress is marching, as it does, with such stupendous rapidity as never before during the existence of our race, instead of advancing he found himself far behind his contemporaries. And why so?

However, before we follow the deep reasonings of the rector any farther, let us acquaint ourselves with his early life, a condensed description of which we are fortunate in having from his own pen.

"I was born and raised in a small city located in the northern section of the State of New York," writes he in his notebook. "My parents were very devout Christians, belonging to the Anglican church. From childhood, in fact ever since I remember, I loved the church intensely, and all connected with it. It was the love of a child, composed of admiration and awe. When I think now of those days, it is clear to me, that, susceptible to impressions as I was, the harmony and æsthetic qualities of what I saw and heard in the church touched and affected the chords of my youthful heart deeply. The fascinating rays of the morning sun which penetrated radiantly through the big stained glass windows, throwing the vivid colorings of a rainbow into the majestic archways of the edifice, presented to my vision a sight which filled me with indescribable delight. The charming sound of the big organ vibrating through the space with its harmonious tones seemed to me as though coming from the silver trumpets of the archangels far

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above, and thrilled me to the depths of my soul. The appearance of the choir boys entering the sanctuary two by two, dressed in cassocks and white surplices, marching slowly and evenly with a rhythmical cadence to the modulations of the chanting of the hymn, seemed to me as a heavenly apparition, reminding me of the enrapturing vision which Jacob had in his dream. A vision like this, which was my constant companion in those days, sufficiently explains why the old church of my birthplace seemed to me the heavenly abode.

"I loved our rector, too. He was a tall and well proportioned man with a benevolent expression and a smile that was as cheerful as it was contagious to all who beheld it the way I did. Somehow or other I always saw him in his black cassock, which being invariably clean and dressy, hung on his perfect figure in such a graceful manner as to arouse my deep admiration. In him I saw a figure of æsthetic composure which was as harmonious as it was indispensable for the finishing effect of the great picture which church life represented. In short, our rector was to me an ideal man,—no, he was not a man. I never imagined him a man. He was a priest, a father, something more than an ordinary man. Was it his attractive figure in the cassock or his pleasant smile that inspired me to think of him as I did?

"I attended church every Sunday morning and evening regularly, and when I reached the requisite age I was admitted into the choir, and oh, dear, dear! how happy I was when I saw myself dressed in a little cassock like that of our rector, and a little snowwhite surplice! I was imbued with the churchly life to such an extent that when at home I frequently imitated our rector in reproducing his sermons, using such of his ges-

ticulations and repeating such expressions as were characteristic of him alone, addressing myself to my dear mother. She would listen to me with her usual motherly pleasure and with such an encouraging earnestness as to enthuse me to the highest pitch of joy. Then she would kiss me tenderly and say: 'Willie, you will be a priest some day?' And a priest I became.

"I knew my Bible lessons to perfection because I liked very much the simple narrative full of heroes who performed great deeds. Owing to this fact, gradually, as I grew, I had no difficulty in understanding the whole universe. I knew exactly how this world of ours was made and why it was made. The first I knew from the Bible, and the second I learned from the teachings of our Holy Catholic church. All of this was to glorify the name of the great God. To preach a thrilling sermon, to lead mankind to good, to happiness, to eternal life, was my sole and incessant dream. I wanted to be a priest because I was born one, all in me tending to show that this was the only calling I could follow. Owing to this intense and uncontrollable desire of mine, as soon as I was graduated from college I entered the old B. Seminary. This being in accordance with the earnest wishes of my parents made me still happier. The studies, which consisted of theology, Christian philosophy, commentaries of fathers of the church, archæology in connection with the biblical countries, universal history and especially the history of the church, disciplinary treatises, and a few other subjects, including the classic languages, came to me surprisingly easy, so that at the end of the term I passed my examination *cum laude*, and was ordained priest by the Rt. Rev. Bishop P. H. Sp. After this I had but a short vacation, when

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I was notified of my appointment as an assistant priest to a comparatively poor parish in New York City. The rector with whom I had to share my labors was an unusually hard worker. Performing his duties with the love of an ardent pastor, he seldom required of me such assistance as would deprive me of the few hours I had for my own use. This was a period of my life which at that time seemed to me of greatest blessing. Perfectly content and happy, I wrote my sermons after the patterns of old, frequently following those found in the most remarkable works of Allison, Irving, Robert Hall, Chalmers, Robertson, and Spurgeon, and on the Sundays allotted to me delivered them with the fervor and zeal that gave untold satisfaction both to me and my hearers. Unfortunately, my stay in that parish was not of long duration. In less than two years after my ordination I was appointed rector to a parish that was still poorer than the one where I had been located. We having become good friends, I regretted very much parting with the rector, for whom to this day I entertain the greatest respect, but aware of my obligations to my bishop, I obeyed his order and took charge of my first parish. Here, for the first time, I realized the importance of the duties of a rector. The task before me was a hard one, inasmuch as I had to labor, not only in the midst of difficulties in matters spiritual, but also in temporal ones,—for I had to think of and devise means for raising funds for the support and improvement of my poor parish. This second part of my labors was distasteful to me, for there was entirely too much of money begging. But realizing that the efficiency of my work largely depended upon the solidity guaranteed by the material well-being of my church, I

used such sagacity and executive ability for the promotion of that part of my labors as laid in my power. Owing to existing conditions, I acted in various capacities in order to diminish the expenses of the church and promote its efficiency. This brought me in contact with people of all trades, conditions, and social standings, and gave me a great opportunity to study men and their deeds in everyday life. I saw a great deal of good and evil, and for the first time discovered that life was not as I had known it from books and my surroundings. The result obtained at the end of five years' incessant labors clearly demonstrated that the Lord had blessed my undertaking. I shall not enter into the details concerning my work for the parish,—this is to be found in the records of the church. What I wish to note here is my own inner life, which about this time became a veritable struggle against the invasions of elements foreign to me. Up to this time my soul had been in a blissful state of activity which was governed and regulated by the established rules of the church. I had no thought of my own. All in me was by the church and for the church. I scrupulously followed its teachings, and this was perfectly satisfactory to me. But, alas, the end of my peaceful life was rapidly approaching, and came like a thunderbolt, destroying and shattering the whole structure of many years' labor.

"It was not until I left the school benches that an uncontrollable desire for reading secular literature was awakened in me. I read a great deal and never missed an opportunity to discuss what I had read with a few clergymen neighbors and friends of mine. These discussions were immensely enjoyable, for at times it be-

came intensely interesting to hear the opinions of my colleagues on a given subject, which did not fail to grow in importance inasmuch as it became instrumental in measuring the comparative strength of the arguments of those taking part in the discussion. Those most proficient in learning displayed a brilliancy that was worthy of admiration.

“About this time a translation of the writings of the eminent Russian philosopher of international fame, Count Tolstoy, appeared in New York City. As I knew very little, or rather nothing, about Russia and Russian literature, and had heard much about the Count, I obtained all I could find of his works in translation and began my reading with his famous book entitled ‘War and Peace.’ The most grandiose work I ever read; a most delightful and instructive book! In this work I detected a great philosopher who was destined to awaken my soul to a new life which was as attractive as it was painful. I followed the Count in his charming narrative of the events which took place in the memorable year of 1812. Step by step I witnessed the triumphal marching of the most picturesque army ever gathered, under the command of the proudest and the most indomitable man who ever sat on a throne. Napoleon invaded the vast country of the Russians with his six hundred thousand men to bring to his feet his former friend, Alexander the First, then on the throne of the Romanoffs. The fascinating pictures representing the great conflict followed one another in rapid succession. Undoubtedly it was due to the Count’s artistic word-pictures that all I read was so vivid, almost tangible in the fullness of real life, but all this was overshadowed by the striking and most power-

ful philosophy of the great thinker of our age. His keen observations in the seemingly most insignificant details, his representation of historic facts in a most suggestive manner, did not fail to impress me deeply. Lulled by the smoothness and lucidity of his philosophy, I followed him with the submission and meekness of a child until I reached that part of the book where he begins the analyzing of well known terms in a way hitherto unknown to me. Having in view the freshly narrated historical events, he asks what caused them, or by what power it happened that the two men, Napoleon and Alexander, stood at the head of two potent armies, ready to destroy and annihilate each other. Who gave Napoleon the power to invade a foreign country? What actuated the rise of the phenomenal wave of the West, flooding the East, and afterwards the East inundating the West? What is that power which moves entire nations? Is it chance that causes this chaos? Is it the genius of one man that creates such disastrous complications? If so, what is chance? What is genius? As though answering these questions, he gave his incomparable illustration of a flock of sheep, to whom a ram, one of their number, who, being well fed and taken care of in a separate pen, fat and sturdy, seemed to be a wonderful genius, surrounded with many surprising chances. The ram was fattened by the owner for the value of its flesh. Of this the sheep knew nothing; but had their philosophy ceased to be exclusively sheepish, they certainly would have acquired different views upon the subject.

“Perfectly fascinated and totally absorbed by the views and deductions of Count Tolstoy, I imbibed all his thoughts with the avidity of an ardent student un-

til in the course of my reading I met the following sentence: '*There is nothing absolute,—all is conditional.*' Here I stopped as though paralyzed by an electric shock, and reread the sentence time and time again. I felt the blood rushing to my head, for my face commenced to burn. 'What!' I exclaimed indignantly, 'is there nothing absolute? How can that be? Was I not taught truths that are absolute? Am I not teaching the same absolute truths? Is it not an absolute truth that there is a God who created heaven and earth? Is it not an absolute truth that the second person of the Holy Trinity was incarnated, lived on this earth and died on the cross to save us from eternal damnation? Is it not an absolute truth that there is a heaven with its ineffable and indescribable glories for the good, and a burning fire of hell for the damnation of the evil? Oh, no! no! Tolstoy is mistaken, surely. The great philosopher errs. I cannot, I will not believe in this statement,'—and I violently threw the unfinished book on the desk and went to take a walk around the church. I tried very hard to dismiss this thought, which shook my whole being, but unfortunately it pursued me wherever I went. When I returned to my room, it still rang in my ears—'*There is nothing absolute!*' 'No,' I objected firmly, 'I did not want to continue the reading. It was a torturing challenge to me. Why should I read opinions contrary to my belief?' In order to remove further temptation I decided to throw the book, all the books, of Count Tolstoy, into the blazing flames of the fireplace of my room; but at that moment a thought came to me. 'Am I not too hasty in my conclusions?' I asked myself. 'Is it fair that I should

condemn a great thinker simply because I have found in his writings a sentence which does not please me? Besides, what matters it that he said there was nothing absolute? Does it really follow that there is no absolute truth while I know, I am convinced, I believe firmly, unconditionally, and positively that there is an absolute truth, many absolute truths; and that all that our mother Holy Catholic and Apostolic church teaches is nothing but absolute truth.' Thus, after a short reflection I decided to finish the reading of the book on hand, which I did with the greatest satisfaction, and after that I read all the rest of the writings of this great man. The more I knew of Count Tolstoy, the greater was my sincere admiration for his views. Yet I could not forgive him his great mistake, as it seemed to me at that time, in making the declaration above quoted.

"Shortly after the occurrences described, I noticed a great change taking place in me. My thinking powers were decidedly awakened, persistently demanding new food. It was no matter what Tolstoy meant by the saying that there was nothing absolute; the fact is that this saying was the first shock which awakened my soul to thinking.

"It often happens that a seemingly insignificant saying like the above remark, or some trivial incident which apparently is devoid of importance, produces on a certain person at a given time a lasting impression and eventually becomes a powerful factor in turning his life into new channels. This is exactly what happened to me. Taking the sentence in question as it sounds, undoubtedly it conveys only truth. Yet why should I have jumped to the conclusion that

this particular sentence was inimical to those truths which were absolute to me, nay, to the whole Christian world? Why should this sentence and only this one have impressed me more than any other I had found in the writings of Count Tolstoy? I had read many important works of very distinguished thinkers of our time. Why was I not impressed by any of their wise sayings and profound thoughts in a similar way? Why should a foreign writer, whose mode of thinking is so different from ours, impress me more than our own? These are questions which I am not able to answer. But when I think of this particular sentence, which impressed me so deeply and against which I rebelled, I find the following reasoning in me: If the saying of the great philosopher is true, as is the case with most of what he says, it must necessarily be applied to all things that we know. Should we do this, the truths which constitute the basis of our faith and which are absolute to us must be recognized as conditional, the same as all the rest of the so-called truths known to mankind. In admitting this conclusion, do we not lose the ground for our faith? If the truths which make our religion are conditional, then they are not of such importance as to make our faith in them a necessity under the penalty of imperilling our present and future lives. Besides, these religious truths are transmitted to us as absolute truths. If they were not absolute, they could not exercise a beneficial influence upon the destinies of nations and individuals. These reflections were the cause of my rebelling against the great writer's saying. But, after all, whether I rebel or not, the fact remains that it has commenced its wonderful work in me and time only will show its final result.

"As the days rolled on, to my great disappointment and disgust I discovered that I knew nothing of the philosophy of the age. All I knew was decidedly one-sided and exceedingly narrow in its scope. The philosophy which I was taught in my school days was of an altogether different structure. It was built with the rules and regulations of syllogisms, which in their turn were cut out and formulated with such smoothness and refined lines as to fit their places admirably. It was a work of mosaic like that made today in the Vatican factory; a structure of polished bricks, between which, when put together, there is not a crack, not a jot to mar its classical evenness and beauty; and this was very pleasing. While logical and conclusive, it left nothing to pass judgment upon. Its own conclusions were powerful enough to force their adoption. In brief, the philosophy of the fathers of the church was a perfect structure, upon which there was left no place for improvement. Like the structure of theology, it represented a mass of absolute, undeniable truths. Having this in view, one can easily imagine my state of mind when I faced the secular philosophy of our day, which, complicated as it is, all the while brings facts upon facts for consideration, leaving one in a labyrinth of incomprehensible phenomena of nature's grandest work.

"In our ecclesiastical psychology, also, we had no difficulty whatever in knowing and defining things belonging to that branch,—simply because we had ready-made formulas which served us as a press machine that makes perfect geometrical figures. All we had to learn was formula. When we faced the unknowable, we applied our formulas and the thing became knowable. Thus we knew it all. Among other things, we had no

difficulty in giving a precise location to the human soul in the human body. We applied our psychological formulary and all was well. I remember yet the Latin formula which I committed to memory as a most expressive one and which seemed to me at that time as clear and comprehensive as the simplest mathematical rule. To the question, '*Ubi est anima?*' (where is the soul?) the answer ran: '*Anima est tota in toto corpore et tota in qualibet corporis parte,*'—which in plain English means that the soul is *the whole* in the whole body and *the whole* in every particle of it. Why is this formula, perfectly satisfactory in the past, not so today? Is it because at the time of my studies I was learning only formulas and today I am learning thinking? At any rate this is a fair specimen of our formulas.

"Our philosophy ran hand in hand with our theology. These two branches were like twin sisters, amplifying and comforting each other to the perfect satisfaction of those on the school benches.

"Permeated with the spirit of this system, for the first time I was facing a philosophy which in the very beginning took possession of my awakened soul and entangled me in endless meditation. This state of affairs naturally made me very critical, inquisitive, and observing. Every sentence pertaining to the mysteries of life that I happened to read or hear provoked a persistent *why*. First, I began to answer this vexatious *why* by the sentences of the fathers of the church, but to my great mortification I soon perceived the utter shallowness of my arguments. No, people who lived centuries ago could not answer questions arising in our times. It is true, the great ethical code of the fathers of the

church provides answers to all questions, but they could not stand my critical views any longer. They were weak and entirely out of date. However, to ascertain whether I was right or wrong, I undertook the work of the resurrection of the fathers. I brought them from their long-forgotten graves and, one by one, placed them in the pulpits of the great centers of Christendom. To my people I pointed them as great pillars of our faith, men of great sanctity who by the special help of the Holy Ghost had preserved for us in their writings the great truths of our holy religion. I saw the masses listening to these holy men with an amazement that was not an omen of good tidings. Saying nothing, they departed and never appeared again. Having made a careful investigation, I learned to my great astonishment that they did not, could not, understand these men who made the church. They were too antiquated. They belonged to the great past, and had nothing to do with the present. Those of the present scrutinized the past with the intelligence and perception of their own times, and found that the past could not regulate their actions. The extremely severe attitude of those men and their religious practices could not please nor excite the devotion of the masses of our day.

“When the anachoretic figure of Origen, the illustrious father of the early church, author of the famous Hexapla and Octapla, appeared before them, and when they learned that this was the man who, in order to secure the salvation of his soul, deliberately undertook the mutilation of his own body by emasculating himself, they joined the rebuking voice of Demetrius, the Bishop of Alexandria, who in the two synods held in that city

vigorously denounced the vicious and reprehensible deed, asserting the invalidity of the ordination to the priesthood which Origen had illegitimately received. But this joint rebuke greatly weakened in its tenor when they heard the powerful voice of St. Jerome, the eminent doctor of the Latin Church and the author of the Latin version of the Bible (called Vulgate), who, in his turn, cherishing the memory of the man who valiantly fought against Celsus, forcefully accused Bishop Demetrius of low jealousy and prejudice in these proceedings.

"Then Cyril, the great authority of the Eastern church and Patriarch of Alexandria, made his appearance. Undoubtedly he would have made a favorable impression with his dignified personality had it not been for the long, purple, shining trail that he left behind him, which was richly saturated with the blood and sufferings of those of his victims who believed differently than he. Here the charitable voice of Theodoret was heard and welcomed approvingly. 'May the immeasurable grace of God prevail over his wickedness,' wrote he in the obituary notice of the deceased patriarch.

"The first of these two great pillars of the Christian church represented that class of fathers who sought the establishment of the expression of God's love through self-destruction, and the second through the destruction of others.

"Neither of these could appeal to the people of to-day, for they have learned the valuable lesson that all that leads to destruction, whether of individuals or masses, or even of those seemingly less important than human entities, is decidedly detrimental and cannot

benefit the object in view. On the contrary, the love of God which is based on hatred,—for hatred only can lead to the act of destruction,—is not and cannot be a legitimate one.

“Then came those fathers of the church who, like Chrysostom and Ambrose, made it their sole object to establish the kingdom of God by inculcating in the hearts of men the terrifying fear of hell and its tortures. The eternal damnation and struggle with the infernal powers which constituted the starting point of the arguments of those holy men, terrorized the men of our day. The austere figures of Tertullian, Augustine, Polycarp—his disciple,—Irenæus, and the rest of a long series of men who made the original church, the teaching church, advocating in substance the same principles enumerated above, passed in review, leaving only the mark of depression and disappointment upon the weary minds of present men. In vain the living generation sought the connecting link. There was nothing, nothing, to connect these two differing elements.

“Then I, an humble priest, mounted the pulpit. I spoke to them a language that was theirs. I repeated a great deal of what was said by the fathers, but if they were impressed with anything, it was with my own words, and for the first time I realized that what I was doing was my own. It was my personality, it was that which connected me with my hearers that was operative. The masses knew of the fathers of the church only by hearsay, and this perhaps was a good adjunct to the sermon, but it had nothing to do with prevailing conditions. These had to be remedied by the present man; by the one who lived with and among the masses; by the

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one who knew of their temporal as well as their spiritual needs; by the one whose daily bread and butter was a part and portion of theirs. This discovery awakened me to a new life. It taught me a precious lesson, namely, that fathers of the church were very well on my shelves, for me, for my exclusive, personal use, to comfort and confirm me, to strengthen my weakened soul, but not for the masses. It was I who had to lead them. It was I, an humble priest, who had to guide them by teaching them the absolute and eternal truths revealed by God.

"Then a new question arose, a new difficulty manifested itself. If the masses refuse to be guided by the men of the past, what causes me to be led by them? Why should I submit to a yoke foreign to my people? To this query the answer came like a stream of water which runs by its own gravity. 'You are a priest, a creature of the institution created and reared by the men of the past. Your long black cassock is a sealed veil upon your entity as a human being. When the bishop who laid his hands upon you said, "Go and preach in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost," he pronounced the verdict of death to your individual entity, death to your creative powers. You accepted this sentence with the required resignation which you were taught during the years of your theological studies. You submitted yourself to the established rules and regulations stamped with the great seal of the past. Now you have to preach and teach, by words and deeds, nothing but what your church, whose creature you are, teaches. You have to dismiss all your desires, aspirations, and thoughts except those in harmony and conformity with the teachings of your church, and

think, speak, and act accordingly. This is why you need the teachings of the fathers of the church; this is why, although utterly useless to the masses, they constitute the sole foundation and basis of your existence as a priest.' This seemed to me perfectly logical. It was the only just and correct view I could assume. I could not alter the situation, and I sincerely deplored those of my brethren in the calling who masqueraded under the feathers of a modern peacock. Yes, if I wished to be a good priest I had to preach what the church taught, and teach it exactly in the same manner and form it always had been preached. Darwin, Spencer, Huxley, and the whole phalanx of others had nothing to do with my preaching, or rather I had nothing to do with their sayings. Copernicus, Galileo Galilei, and the whole legion of astronomers may say and preach that our earth rotates. I have nothing to do with that. The Holy Bible says that the earth is firm; so it is. Oh, what a pitiful sight the former Cardinal Barberini made of himself when, after his accession to the pontificate (1623) under the title of Urban *VIII*, although a personal friend of the persecuted astronomer, he confirmed the inquisitorial findings that the teachings of Galileo were formally heretical, because expressly contrary to the Holy Scriptures. Galileo's letters to Castelli, Copernicus's work on the revolution of the heavenly bodies, and Kepler's epitome of the Copernican theory, were placed on the Index Expurgatorius, whence they were not removed until the time of Benedict *XIV* (1740). If we had to perform such formalities as that in our day, all of our time would have to be devoted to what others say. They may say whatever they please, but the church must remain firm.

"The most difficult thing is to take the first brick out of the wall of a substantial structure. After the first, the second comes easier, the third cannot resist, and after the fourth and the fifth the whole structure comes down. So it is with the faith of our fathers. If you destroy one principle, remove or alter one truth enunciated by them, you will be tempted to remove another, and finally there will remain only the ruins of the past. Hence the safest and the best policy is to be conservative. If you can add to the structure, do so by all means; but beware of the work of destruction, for by destroying what made you what you are, you will destroy yourself. Is not this clear? Is not this logical?

"This is all very well so far, but alas, what shall I do with those of my hearers who have ceased to believe in the stability or fixity of the earth? They know too much about this planet of ours. They have measured its circumference. They know the exact size and dimensions of it. Nay, they know more than this. They know much about the other planets, other suns than ours and their systems. They predict catastrophies and movements of heavenly bodies. They know these things with mathematical precision. O Lord! O Lord! Why is Your servant put to this cruel test? If all knowledge comes from Thee, then why, O Lord, were we once told that the earth was firm, that Joshua stopped the sun (which evidently was moving then) and now learn that the sun does not move and that the earth rotates on its own axis and around the sun? If one is true, the other must necessarily be a lie. A lie?—hush, hush,—my poor soul. I am blushing scarlet at the thought of this alternative, should it be applied to

the old truth; and yet, lo, there is no other solution,—the alternative is inevitable. The Bible used colloquial language in expressing the fixity of the earth, we say today. But was not that colloquial language used to convey a truth? How can we attribute to God a revelation which plainly indicates that its author did not know the laws governing our planetary system?

“At this moment the venerable figure of Tolstoy appeared before me, reiterating what he had written before, that there was nothing absolute in this world; the moral teaching of which was, that what was true when the Bible was written was not true today. Strange language and still stranger conclusion. A truth, if it is a truth, always must remain the same. If it is not true today, it was not true the day it was written, nor at any time before or after. Therefore whoever made this statement in the Bible either was guilty of an intentional falsehood or was utterly ignorant of the laws governing our planet. In either case it cannot be attributed to God, for falsehood and ignorance are foreign to Him. But am I not transgressing the limits of my reasonings? O Lord, have mercy on me. Yet I cannot help it. The thoughts are crowding my poor head. I must think, I must reason. Either the Bible tells us truth or falsehoods. If I have to follow the teachings of the church, I have to believe that the Bible contains nothing but what was written by inspiration, and whatever is in that book, whether of moral or disciplinary character, coming from God as it does, contains nothing but truth. This being the case, what shall we do with those truths which we acquire through our own experiences and which openly contradict those contained in the Bible? Shall we deny the

veracity of our solar system? Shall we reject a long series of experimental truths demonstrated by our modern astronomy, geology, biology, physics and chemistry, which stand in radical opposition to the conceptions conveyed in the Bible? I cannot help repeating that whatever language was used in the old Writ, it certainly served to convey some truths, for otherwise the book would have no value whatever. However, following the spirit of interpretation of the Scriptures advanced by the defenders of our faith, I am forced to come to the inevitable conclusion that the truths contained in the Bible are conditional with the aptitude of the understanding of those who wish to be instructed by it. When the Bible was written, and until the end of the sixteenth century, the earth was firm, because the people saw it that way. Now the earth is rotating, because the people, instructed by the astronomers and by their own observations, see it that way. In the first place, what the Bible said was true without any explanation whatsoever. In the second, it is also true, *but*—oh, that little *but*—it needs some explanation, which, of course, we, the clergy, the *Ecclesia docens* of the past and present, by the help of our all knowing theology have to furnish. O what a pitiful position for a truth which cannot stand on its own merits! Does not this look as though the Bible was written by men of the most ordinary caliber, who wrote things as they saw them? Moreover, does not this indicate that God, who is the source of all knowledge, omniscient as He is, had nothing to do with the statement which changes its tenor as the people advance in experimental knowledge? This sounds quite logical, but am I not losing my ground? Is it not my sacred duty to assert that what-

ever the Bible says is true? But then what becomes of the truth which being absolute must necessarily remain always the same? Should we concede that the Bible made a mistake in this one case, would we not be bound to admit many other similar mistakes? No, that would not do. Our duty is to build, not to destroy. We must maintain the stability of the old truth. This one instance taught us a valuable lesson. We cannot deny the Copernican theory, nor can we impeach the authority of the Bible. In order to harmonize the two and remove once and forever all possible friction, we have to follow the wise advice of the fathers of the church of the seventeenth century, who taught us one of the most genial formulas ever advocated, which fills the gap wonderfully well. This finely devised formula, which we have been using quite successfully in our day, is that the Scriptures speak *allegorically*. O what a magic word! What an exquisite idea! Allegory is a thing which we can use as we please. It can easily and without the least inconvenience alter its ground to suit the occasion. This one word *allegory* will certainly silence the less sophisticated and baffle those with brains. It will explain all. Should the modern doctrine of evolution eventually be accepted by the scientific world, which is rapidly advancing to that stage, *allegory* will sustain the Bible, and the church of God will be saved. Is not this glorious? Ay, so it is. We know its workings already. When an assailant is found, he is told that he does not understand the Bible, and that is why its contents seem to him out of date. In order to do this properly he must know the allegorical language of it, and that he can learn from us! Splendid, indeed, splendid! An argument that is as con-

sistent as it is rational. This is very well for the maintenance of the structure of the church, but lo, what about me? Am I not familiar with the formulas that formulate all? Here I am thinking not so much of how to explain it to my people as of how to make it logically comprehensible to myself. To explain complications of this sort to my people is a much easier task. The people go to the church *a priori* prepared to listen to all we have to say, doubting nothing and accepting all. The one who doubts, who opposes Christian teachings, does not go to church, so there is no difficulty in explaining things to our people. But when my own reasoning steps in and forcefully demands a rational explanation, then the problem decidedly becomes insolvable without concessions amounting to sacrifices.

"But, O Lord! what am I doing? In permitting my thoughts to run in this manner, am I not digging my own grave? Am I not falling into heresy? No, I must stop here. Away, away with all reasonings! Perish secular philosophy, perish all modernism! I am a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. I believe, O Lord! I believe firmly, sincerely, and unconditionally in all that our mother church teaches. O Lord, have mercy on me! O Holy Ghost, help me, comfort me, teach me, free me from the temptations of worldly wisdom, and save, save the exhausted and weakened soul of Thy servant!"

CHAPTER II

THE VOLCANIC ERUPTION

"The unusual and aggressive activity which followed the unexpected and abrupt awakening of my soul and which placed me in a torturing state of mind, notwithstanding all my earnest efforts I have not been able to check to this day. I am advancing as rapidly as I can think consistently. The magical sentence of Count Tolstoy which opened before me a labyrinth of thoughts, still remains the leading power in my researches and investigations. The more I advance, the greater my stupefaction at the amazing complications accumulated during the many thousand years of the immediate past which I am facing. The state of my mind is one of tormenting disquietude. It is excruciating, distressing, and exceedingly bitter, yet it appears to be of a necessity *sine qua non* for me.

"Several years have elapsed since I wrote the preceding pages. During this time my reasoning power has been greatly increased. It has progressed to such an extent that today I can hardly recognize my own writings of a few years ago. They seem to me exceedingly timid and devoid of value; and yet undoubtedly they have an intrinsic merit of their own, inasmuch as they represent the vivid picture of the gradual development of my dormant thinking faculties, a state which I owe exclusively to my theological training.

This training taught me to rely implicitly and confidently upon a syllogism constructed and framed solely to maintain the premises laid in the past. It forbade severely and unconditionally the investigation of the given premises. Owing to this fact, the workings of the syllogism such as presented to the body of students gave us only mechanical results, establishing the inevitable superfluity of thinking which necessarily followed the given system. Today the matter has assumed an entirely different aspect. It has reached that stage of maturity where the acceptance of a set of views, no matter what their origin, becomes entirely inadmissible and radically impossible without the support of a rational ground. The more lofty, the more sublime a conception, the stronger the reason for its existence must be. Let it be what it may, one thing, however, is clear to me: the one who does not dare to face the truth, no matter how bitter, how disappointing, is a pitiable coward. Let my motto be *vitam impendere vero*.

"A syllogism is the regular logical form of every argument, consisting of three propositions, of which the first two are called the 'premises,' and the last, the 'conclusion.' The conclusion necessarily follows from the premises; so that if these are true, the conclusion must be true and the argument amounts to demonstration, as in the following example:

Every virtue is laudable;
Kindness is a virtue;
Therefore kindness is laudable.

"These propositions are denominated respectively the *major premise*, the *minor premise* and the *con-*

clusion. If the premises are not true and the syllogism is regular, the reasoning is valid and the conclusion, whether true or false, is correctly derived.

"The above is the generally accepted syllogistical structure, which warrants a correct reasoning.

"However, in the quoted example, which at the first glance seems to be perfectly correct as much in both its premises as it is in its conclusion, before we will accept it, we are at liberty to investigate the value of the *major* and the *minor* premises. We may object to the first by questioning the laudability of every virtue. In doing this we are perfectly justified, having in view the existing diversity of the conception of a virtue. What was considered a virtue at a given time, in a given country, and by a given people, is not so at some other time, in some other country, and to some other people. The great father and pillar of the Christian church, Origen, unquestionably considered the act of emasculation, to which he voluntarily submitted himself, a virtue; for he followed the literal meaning of the text given by Matthew 19:12. We profess the same creed which he professed, we read with the same devotion the given text, yet we do not consider the act of emasculation a virtue. On the contrary, we consider it a reprehensible act, and we are perfectly justified in saying this, for our conceptions of virtue today are radically different from those in the days of Origen. This happened many centuries ago, but even today there are people who practice this very inhuman act for the same reason which led the famous Alexandrian to its perpetration. The sectarians who practice this on religious grounds, following the above quoted Scriptural text, are very numerous and well known in the Russian Em-

pire under the name of Skaptzy. They are living in our times and in the midst of our culture and civilization. Yet do we or can we agree with them in the conception they have of a virtue? Certainly not. Polygamy and polyandry are virtues with beneficial tendencies to many millions of the inhabitants of our globe, but they are not so to us. A virtue in China or Japan is not ours. A virtue of a Mohammedan or Persian conception is a debasing act in our cultured estimation. The ferocious persecution of non-Christians during the many deplorable early crusades originated in Europe and conducted under the guidance of the then dominating church; the famous Inquisition in Spain, directed by the same power; the religious wars during the period of the Reformation, when nations and families, divided against each other, were mercilessly subjected to the fury of fire and sword, annihilating properties and destroying the lives of the innocent; the persecution of individuals whose names point out the bloody pages of Christian history; all these cruelties were actuated by the conception of virtue. It was a virtuous act to decapitate kings and queens; to burn alive monks and men of science; to banish Huguenots and Puritans. From these and innumerable other similar examples which fill the pages of the history of nations, we are safe in concluding that the conception of a virtue, like any other conception, is as much limited as it is conditional with the mental development which masses and individuals have attained in different countries and during different epochs. The same ruling we can apply to the *minor premise* of the above given example, and thus following this system of investigation, we can bring our

premises to a standing which will give us a proper structure of the syllogism and insure a correct conclusion from it.

"But this is not the case in the construction of a theological syllogism. In this, when we are dealing with the fundamental doctrine of the church, our *major* and *minor premises* must necessarily always be an expression of the standing teachings of the church, which we are not at liberty to question. As for the conclusion, it will necessarily follow in a way that is perfectly logical, owing its derivation solely to the construction of the syllogism as shown in the following example and not necessarily to the veracity of the premises as illustrated in the preceding one:

Every revelation is a truth;
The church teaches only revelations;
Therefore the church teaches truths.

"Following this pattern, those Christians who refuse to recognize the authority of a *teaching church* construe their case in the following form:

Every revelation is a truth;
The Bible teaches but revelations;
Therefore the Bible teaches truths.

"In both of the above constructions we are severely admonished not to question the veracity of the given premises. Why so? Simply because they are given to us as absolute and undeniable truths. But are they absolute? To the question what makes these revelations absolute, we have the answer conveyed in the following syllogism:

All that God reveals are absolute truths;
All revelations are revealed by God;
Therefore all revelations are absolute truths.

“By the imperative tenor of the above we are bound to accept that revelations, coming as they do from God who is the only giver of truths that are absolute, must be and are absolute truths. However, before we proceed any further it is only reasonable that we should ascertain whether we understand the premises before us. The *major* speaks of God as of a known entity. This statement, *all that God reveals are absolute truths*, forcibly implies that we know God. Had we not known God, we would not know that He was the giver of truths that are absolute. In other words, we must first know God in order to know the character of the revelations made by Him. Now the question arises, do we really know God, and if we do, what do we know of Him? Should anyone ask such a question as this, the theologian representing the Christian doctrine would promptly give the following answer: We know that God is the Supreme Being; the eternal and Infinite Spirit, the Creator and Sovereign of the universe; Jehovah. He is omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent. He has no beginning and no end. He is just, good, and loving. All perfections are centered in Him and as such He is absolute in Himself and His deeds. In brief, GOD IS ABSOLUTE. This is the theological definition as to what God is, and by this definition we are expected to know Him. However, should we test our knowledge of God, omitting all the enumerated attributes, we certainly will know God if we know what the absolute is. Now again the question arises, what is absolute? What does that mean?

“The word ‘absolute,’ which is known to us only by definition, means the following: *loosed from any limitation; uncontrolled, unrestricted; unconditional*. From these it is evident that the *Absolute* is *non relative*, and as such necessarily remains capable of being thought or conceived by itself alone. When applied to space, it represents something that is imperceptible. When applied to time, it represents something inconceivable. When applied to an entity, it represents something that is incomprehensible, or to be more precise, when the word ‘absolute’ is applied to the conceptions known to us, whether we call them space, time or anything else, they must cease to be such in order to become absolute. *The Absolute commences where we end our thinking*. We can think only within the limits of our consciousness, which is only relative. We cannot know a thing unless we are able to think of it. The Absolute, being non-relative, is positively unthinkable to us, therefore utterly unknowable. We know a set of words, such as those given above describing God, and repeat them quite often without even stopping to think that these words actually do not teach us anything, for they represent a set of conceptions entirely out of the limits of our understanding. Such being the nature of God, it surpasses the scope of the capability of human conception. Yet notwithstanding this self-evident fact that we are dealing with an entity—if such a word can be applied to an absolute—which is positively unknowable and unthinkable to us, we emphatically insist that we know God well, so well, indeed, that we know all His doings. This knowledge of ours surely does not come from the definitions given above, for they are far beyond our comprehension. The only source where we

get the said knowledge is derived from the Scriptural teachings. Now then let us see what we know of God and His deeds from this source.

“With no exception, all Christian men of the past and present represent God as a man. *God created man in His own image*, we read in the Scriptures. This statement inevitably teaches us that if man is an image of God, God must be the original image of man. Undoubtedly it is due to this fact that in the Scriptures, in the opinions of the fathers of the church, and in innumerable theological works, we read of God as having the qualifications and even the defects of man. The only difference we find between the mortal man and God is that whatever God possesses is in a superlative degree. When He exercises His goodness there is no limit to it. When He puts in execution His justice, He is as generous in bestowing His love and paternal affection, as He is in the exercise of His wrath. He has an abundance of goodness and forgiveness, but He also has an overwhelming anger and revengefulness. The first is manifested in the promise of heaven, and the second in the purpose of an eternal hell. God assumes an attitude and appearance to individuals and communities in accordance with their mental development and such as are permitted by their imagination, which, of course, is always relative. To some people, God sits on His golden throne, surrounded by such angels and archangels, powers and potentialities, as they can remember from the Scriptures and think of. The city He inhabits has silver-paved streets and all the glittering splendor of worldly goods. Those with less propensities to the material—and these are comparatively few—have Him in His ineffable glories,

which include all that can be imagined, or rather what cannot be imagined,—the best and the highest. Following the example of the past, the people of today speak of His heart, eyes, ears, hands, fingers, and feet, which makes God appear to be a man, only a big man, bigger than we can imagine. Following the old fashion of the Greeks, and in conformity with the conception of the Romans, a mass of pictures and statuary produced during the many centuries of the Christian era, representing God in a form of a man and in a great variety of attitudes, vividly strengthens this belief.

“God loves the best of His creation so well that He builds this enchanting universe with all of its wonders to make man happy. He creates the beautiful sun to give light and warmth to man. He makes the charming moon, the immense sky dotted with myriads of brilliantly shining stars, to demonstrate His love of man. To the first man, for whose creation He needs the moulding of clay, He gives the beautiful garden, and makes him the sole possessor of it, but He also puts within his reach the source of a deplorable temptation in the shape of a curious woman.

“His work in the making of the angels, however, proves to be so defective that a legion of them rebel against the idea of adoring the predicted one to be born of a woman, and repudiated and ejected, they become devils, sworn enemies of the Creator. In order to punish them, God in His unfathomed wisdom creates a hell with eternal tortures, and makes it the sole abode of the angels who rebelled and of those men who follow their example.

“The advanced man of today abhors the idea of

harming any man or even a beast, no matter how offensive they may be. Cruelties and barbarities committed by the rulers and kings in the past are incidents which provoke the just condemnation of the men of today. It is not so with the God of our conceptions. He is as severe today as He was when He created hell. His munificence to the good is as great today as His ire toward the evil. Men may advance in formulating their views, but God must remain the same, because He is unchangeable. This is one of the set of absolute truths and this is, in brief, the way we see and know the absolute God.

"The conceptions we have of God are not only deprived of anything that approaches perfection and absolutism, but represent a mass of contradictions which as they are transmitted to us from generation to generation, no sane mind of today can combine with all the help of allegories. The perfect God creates perfect angels, but, alas, some of these perfect angels become perfect devils, and so dangerous are their rapacious propensities that they have to be confined to a hell. Notwithstanding this fact, today, as well as in the past, they come to the earth to tempt men to evil doings. They were locked in hell, yet they can promenade amongst men.

"The perfect God creates a perfect man, but lo, the man who was created perfect in order to remain perfect, shamefully failed simply because he was kind and complaisant to the woman whom God created for his companionship and help. God is omniscient, yet He did not know what the woman He created was capable of doing. Nay, He never knew what was good until *He saw that it was good*. She corrupted the man. But

who corrupted the woman? Where did she learn her perfidy and frivolity? From the devil. Then who corrupted the devil? The conceit. How could such a base notion penetrate the abode of perfection which the angels inhabited? Where did such a stupendous absurdity obtain its origin? It was not in the angels, for they were created perfect, which means free from all wicked feelings to which undoubtedly the conceit belongs. It will necessarily follow that that groundless pride came from somewhere else. But there was no place or thing that was not created by God. Therefore this *causa causarum*—the cause of causes—of the misery of mankind was created by God! If so, why should the angel, the man, and the woman be blamed? If God did not know the mischievous propensities of the woman He created, He was not omniscient. If, on the contrary, He knew she would become the contemptible cause of man's fall, why did He create such a woman and, furthermore, why should He blame the man? Is not this a clear case of injustice such as no respectable man of today would commit intentionally?

"The genesis of the devil represents one of the most striking contradictions. We are taught that the good and perfect angels became devils because they were told that there would be born a man from a virgin whose mission would be to save the fallen human race and whom they, the angels, must adore. Upon hearing this, they resented the would-be imposed act, which they thought would be humiliating, saying that they, being perfect angels, would not adore a man born of a woman. This senseless and arrogant spirit displayed by the angels was the result of the ugly feeling of the conceit they had conceived, for which there was no

place in heaven and consequently they were ejected and thrust into the hell newly created for them. This is the beginning of the devil who, being enraged against God, tempted the first woman, appearing to her in the shape of a serpent. But the strange fact is that the woman was tempted before there was a devil; in other words the devil tempted the woman before he was a devil. The prediction of the Messiah whom the angels had to adore could follow only after the fall of the man, and only then the transformation of the angels into devils could have taken place, for there would be no necessity for a Messiah had the first man not fallen. Therefore, in order to have a devil to tempt the woman, we must have him before the event of the temptation. Yet according to the sense of the teaching, the temptation of the woman and the fall of the man, which actuated the promise of the Messiah, anticipated the fall of the angels. On the other hand, if all this was conceived and planned by the Almighty long before these events took place, why should they be attributed to the weakness of man, provoking the administration of the justice of God? Moreover, should we even admit the supposition that the cause of the fall of the man was his own wickedness, does not this indicate that the man was not created perfect by God? We have an illustration of a watch, which necessarily needs a watchmaker. This has been frequently used in the past, and even in our day, to demonstrate the existence of God. But how disadvantageous this illustration is we can see when applied to the above fact. The watchmaker makes a watch which, owing to its defective construction, does not perform the required action, and in consequence the watchmaker takes a hammer and smashes the watch

into pieces. That the watch does not justify the expectations of its maker, who is to be blamed, the watch or its maker?

“The above is a picture of the conceptions we have of the doings of an absolute God ; or rather, to be more precise, I should have said that these are conceptions transmitted to us for our belief, which unquestionably belong to the man of many thousand years ago. They are not ours, most assuredly. Why do we accept them? Simply because they are presented to us as absolute truths revealed by God, and these absolute truths are of such a complicated nature that it takes a skilled theologian to explain them. In doing this he will tell us of the finite being incapable of understanding the doings of the Infinite. The Infinite is another term for the Absolute, therefore utterly incomprehensible to all men. This being the case, how can a theologian, being a man like any other mortal, understand it? If he cannot, how can he speak of it? What is the purpose of things we cannot understand? If we know this fact that the finite cannot understand the Infinite, does not the Infinite know this same fact? If He does, why does He give us revelations which we cannot understand? Why does He insist that we should understand things which are simply inaccessible to our thinking power? Will any man, no matter how limited intellectually, insist upon his children following a set of directions which he is qualified to dictate to them, while he knows that they are not able to understand them? The Infinite or Absolute of our conception not only insists that we should understand the non-understandable, but He threatens us with eternal punishment if we do not. Can this be attributed to a God that is absolute?

“Still greater contradictions we find when we consider the purpose of these absolute truths. We are taught that they are of great necessity to us, nay, to the whole human race, and upon their acceptance and application depends our welfare in the present and future life. This being the case, the question arises why this set of absolute truths, so necessary to mankind, is not revealed to all men alike on this earth? The Christian nations taken together represent a small portion of the human race. Why should these truths be known only to Christians and not to the rest of the race? On the other hand, if revelations made by God are all true, those made in China and Japan must also be true. If we are to follow logically the sense of the syllogism given above—that God is the source of all revelations, therefore all revelations are true—are not we bound to conclude that all revelations, coming from God as they do, whether revealed in Palestine or in any other part of the earth, are true? This is the only consistent conclusion. Yet should we assert this as Christians, we are committing a terrible error. How could we admit that revelations to the Africans, those made in the shadows of the lofty Himalaya, those announced in the vast empire of the Celestials, those received on the banks of the Ganges and Nile, on the shores of Malabar and Madagascar, those known on the islands of Ceylon and Borneo, those promulgated in Thibet and Arabia and innumerable other places, are equally true? Should we do this, we will certainly lose the absolutism we are attaching to that set of revelations which are known only to Christian nations, and this would undoubtedly be detrimental to the solidity of our creed. Yet the question arises, why, what is the reason that only those

revelations are true which came from the Jewish people, once a leading nation in the now Asiatic Turkey? Many men of distinction and integrity, whose followers today are millions upon millions, have imparted revelations constituting a set of teachings which, according to their statement, they received from God. Are they all false? Are all of these men deceivers, charlatans, and liars? The substance of our belief is that there is only one God and that all revelations come from Him. Should we try to substantiate this belief by facts, we will fail right at the very start, for we know that there are, besides the one originated by the Jews (which we claim to be the only true revelations) many other sets of revelations professed as coming from God and accepted as such by different peoples in different parts of the world, which have little or nothing in common with those constituting the basis of our creed. Either we have to admit that, there being only one God, all revelations, whether received by the Jews or any other nation, came from the same God and therefore they are all true, or that there are as many gods as there are different sets of revelations. Should we accept the first, we will be forced to admit that God gave different revelations to different people, which would be simply absurd. God, being absolute, cannot contradict himself. Should we adhere to the second, we will contradict ourselves by ascribing relativity to one God, which is also absurd. This being the case, naturally we are bound to ask what arguments we can advance in order to prove that ours are the only authentic and true revelations. We are bound under penalty of eternal damnation to assert that only those revelations are true which came from Asiatic Turkey and which were re-

vealed by Jehovah, a Jewish word by which Jews designated their God. It is only logical that we should do so, if only for the reason that they constitute the basic principles of our religion. But it is equally consistent and logical to know why we do so.

“Long and mature contemplation upon this query forces me to accept the only logical deduction. The set of revelations originated by the Jews several thousand years ago, notwithstanding the puerile and contradictory conceptions constituting its whole, we accept today as truths for the sole reason that our ancestors during the last nineteen hundred years have adopted them as their own.

“Transplanted from the wilderness of Asia into the fertile soil of the western continent, where the last existing prestige of the Romans was dying out in the excesses of profligate voluptuousness, it grew rapidly and wonderfully well. Idealized by the passing culture of the Greeks, shaped into practical form by the juridical sense of the Romans, centralized by the unity of one God, elevated to the sublimity which passeth human understanding, it became a power which, after three long centuries of valiant struggle and rich sacrifices raised its triumphant standard on the surface of a land saturated with tears and innocent blood at the dawn of the declining years of Constantine the Great. Since that memorable day the predominant Indo-European race has busied itself with the practical use of the set of revelations advocated by the best minds of the leading men of the time. The details which engaged and absorbed their whole attention were so numerous and so personal to individuals and communities that there was no place for, nor had they any desire

to think of, anything that would interrupt their daily occupations. It grew out of the ashes of the then passing religions. Conceptions of the Greeks and the Romans, such as those inculcated into the minds of the masses, were too human to be able to meet the requirements of growing humanity. The beautiful statue of Belvidere occupied too small a place in the universe. Zeus himself had dimensions that were limited. The best minds of the day took a flight that was great, so great, in fact, that they reached the end of the world, which was marked on contemporary maps as being where Gibraltar is now. The conceptions worked out by the best intellects of the time, enlarging and enriching those imported from the fallen Semitic race, and intermingled with those of far East origin, reached that stage of growth before which the crippled human ingenuity of the past had to bow. Little did they care about the understanding of what they proposed to the wearied man of the day. The leading intellects of the time knew well the possible; it was the impossible which baffled them, and this, which they styled the divine, they clothed with terms inaccessible to the human mind, and there they rested. Accustomed to dictatorial authority, they invested the folklore of the dethroned and dispersed Jews with such superhuman powers as would make the most valiant hero of the day tremble; for prisons, scaffolds, and the far-away deserts were ever ready to devour any and all who would oppose the growing spirit of the time. It grew, it spread until it covered a big portion of the land inhabited by the immigrated race of India. Generation after generation sucked from their mothers' breasts traditions of ancestors which did not fail to

imprint their own stamp, fortifying the standing of the memory of the past. As time rolled on, the transformation of conceptions made gradual progression, but alas, not without leaving traces of primitive origin. The ferocity and bloodthirstiness of the God of old was not forgotten. The blood immolation had to cease, but the sacrifice had to remain, if only under the name of a bloodless one. Following this system, the conceptions of the primitive Jew were transformed into the refined, classical, and scholastic ones of European culture. A mass of new terminologies was fabricated to express the inexpressible. The more obscure the terms were, the greater was their value. The greater the contrast between the understandable and the non-understandable, the better and the firmer the commanding attitude of the latter, and the submissive one of the former. Those in power led the masses in order to establish the kingdom of the great God. O what a mockery! As though God did not establish His Kingdom when He created the universe. They knew all about God, His providential workings, His plans, schemes, and purposes, better than God Himself and still better than their own worldly affairs. This wonderful knowledge grew more and more as the centuries rolled on, until it reached us in an enormous quantity of casuistical works which teach us not what the absolute actually is, or can be, for this is out of their power, but what those men who wrote the books thought it was. What was practiced in the past we practice today. The gipsy is a gipsy because he was born a gipsy.

"Owing to the prevailing conditions during nineteen hundred years, the conceptions originated by the Jews,

although still remaining in their primitive form in the original writings, have acquired so much of that particular polish of ours which is so different from the Semitic one that today it seems incredible to admit that we are governed by a set of ethics deducted from the Jewish conceptions. Jewish conceptions? Oh, no, no. Nothing of the kind. What we possess is our sweet property. Jews have nothing to do with us. Nevertheless the fact remains that it was the Jewish God, Jehovah, who created the world, the first man, and the first woman. He told them, *crescite et multiplicamini*. They obeyed the order and peopled the earth which God had created for their use and pleasure and which they are still using to the best of their ability. It was through the Jewish patriarchs and prophets that God was pleased to dictate His commandments, His laws. Nay, Christ Himself was a Jew. His holy mother was a Jewess. His apostles, like Himself, were circumcised Jews. The hatred—a very ugly feeling—which Christians have displayed toward the Jews during many centuries was periodically explained by the fact that the Jews of today and those of the past since the beginning of our era deservedly were held in contempt simply because they refused to recognize the promised Messiah. They refused to follow one of their own and disclaimed Him. They said He was not the one they expected. The one announced by the prophets was not born yet. He has not come yet, but he will in the near future. They claim that they know their own affairs better than foreigners. They fully understand the teachings of their ancestors. They are cognizant of the spirit of the old Writ, and know well the traditions of their race. To this we reply that all their

assertions are stupendous lies. Their perfidy and malignity inspires them with the affirmations they make. The curse of God is upon them, for today as a people they have no country, nor a name of a dignified nation. Yet notwithstanding all that we say and think of the Jews, the fact remains that we, the advanced Indo-Europeans, are governed by a set of revelations which were originated by them. Their puerile and senseless conceptions were refined and polished to suit our tastes and meet our demands. A long series of men, distinguished by their intellectual merits, have devoted their entire lives to this work. Most of them voluntarily entered gloomy monastic cells to spend their lives in obscurity, writing current opinions on the themes borrowed from the Jews. They labored faithfully and honestly, and left to us our share of patrimony in volumes and volumes of parchment, a small portion of which I cherish in my library. Yet, notwithstanding the importance they attached to the work they accomplished, the Jewish conceptions, transformed into a set of polished terminology purposely made *ad hoc*, remain as contradictory as they were originally puerile. This terminology now in vogue, consisting of words inaccessible to our understanding, such as Absolute, Infinite, and Divine, forced them to advance a formula which teaches that we must believe in what we do not understand for this very reason that we do not understand, for could we understand, there would be no place for believing. Why should the impossible, the inaccessible, and the unthinkable have such a preponderance? Is it because the mysterious unknown frightens us into blind submission? O how human this is! Notwithstanding the high sounding terminology ascribed

to divine inspiration, the work these brave men accomplished remains only human. Owing to this fact, men thirsty for power and leadership disagreed. Owing to this same fact, divisions upon divisions followed. Each and every new reformer found that his ancestors, together with his contemporaries, were in a terrible error. The Byzantines fought against the Romans, whom they called usurpers. The latter branded the leaders of the Eastern Empire heretics destined to go right straight to hell. An Augustinian monk, being deeply offended at the refusal of Roman authorities to recognize in him a genius, in a most uncereemonious fashion detected the impiety and corruption of his superiors, of his mother church. He was acclaimed the saviour of the human race, and this was called the beginning of the Reformation. Soon after there were men among the reformed ones who found fault with the Reformation and started to reform those who were reformed.

"The stronger in brutal force the man was, the higher was his claim to the divine mission which served him as a mantle of divine providence to cover personal ambition, oftentimes consisting of shallow vanity. A king governed by his sexual propensities did not hesitate to overthrow existing order in his country in order to establish his own. A newly proclaimed emperor succeeded in establishing a gigantic autocracy against which, after a period of two centuries, one hundred and forty million enslaved people are still struggling for their liberty. In both of these cases the rulers acted in the name of divine providence, each of them having proclaimed and instituted himself the absolute head of the church of his country, a privilege their

successors on the banks of the Neva and the Thames fully enjoy to this day. That they both were murderers, one of them having imbrued his royal hands in the blood of his only son, and the other in that of his wife, presumably did not make them less eligible to the divine function they so eagerly assumed to discharge. A man who was not able to regulate his domestic affairs to such an extent that he had to divorce his wife, found fault with the Church of England, and undertook a new reformation, which proved to be very fertile on the American soil. In a few decades afterwards, the *venerable general* found out that the latest reformer was not what the world needed, and established on his own account a new branch of militant Christians, with drums, pipes, tambourines, and all sorts of noisy instruments.

"Owing to this chaos of reformations, today we have as many gods and as many Christs as there are Christian churches. The Christ of the old Roman church is not anything like the one worshiped in the other churches. He is infinitely kind to His children, but He takes particular care in expressing His wishes that they should be governed by sacraments and sacramentalias, and should they commit a mortal sin and die without contrition or confession, He sends them to eternal hell. That mortal sin is defined and specified by the teaching church, which is represented by the clergy. The teaching church has decreed that a voluntary omission of hearing mass on Sundays and Holy days of obligation, is a mortal sin, and should one die in that state, its penalty is eternal damnation. It is not so with our Christ. It is true that we have sacraments, but we have no sacramentalias, and our faithfuls are not sent to hell should they omit the hearing of our

mass. Presbyterians, Methodists, and all the rest of the Protestant Christians have no masses, no sacraments, nor sacramentalias. Their Christ does not wish to know anything of that sort. All He asks of them is that they should believe in Him and they will be saved.

“Illustrations showing that the Christ of one Christian church is radically different from the Christ of another church are too numerous to be mentioned here. Besides, they are not so striking and remarkable as the other fact that the Christ of a given church, no matter under what name, does not always remain the same in the same church. He is as changeable as human ingenuity is progressive. The Christ of England during the many centuries before the Reformation insisted that the recognition of the supremacy of the Roman Pope and submission to his spiritual authority, which was granted and established by Himself, was a necessity for the salvation of English souls, for there was no salvation outside of that one church which was governed by the successor of Peter the fisherman. But after the Reformation, when the Church of England was nationalized, or rather localized, conditions were changed considerably. Now we think and firmly believe that our Christ wishes us, nay commands us, to keep away from the Italian pontiff, and by doing this we are much better Christians than ever before. More or less similar transformations of Christ we find invariably in every single Christian church which dates its existence after the epoch of the Reformation. Yet notwithstanding all this chaos of conceptions which we have and which follow those of Jewish origin, we advance them as absolute and undeniable truths. What shall I

say of a legion of new Christian sectarians which grows in number and astonishing variety? And all of these in the name of the absolute and undeniable truths revealed by God!

"This, unfortunately, is the real picture of the existing diversities of the Christian religion. My reasoning may seem bold and perhaps out of place for a priest of the Anglican church. But why should one be blamed for seeing things as they are? Is it not a greater crime to silence one's reasoning than to remain in a brutal ignorance which is proper only to those of creation who are deprived of the power of thinking? I am created by my Maker just as I am. All in me is His work. It is He who gave me the power of reasoning I am utilizing. My motive is as honest today as it was the day I consecrated my life to the service of God. The parable of talents told by the Master encourages me in my researches. The more one possesses, the more is required of him. No doubt ever entered my mind. The only object of my contemplation is the proper understanding of the set of teachings I have to impart. Blind submission is a blessing to those who feel happy with it. Not so with me. My happiness lies in the cultivation of powers manifested in me. 'O how self-reliant you seem to be!' I hear my friends saying. No. Selfishness does not look for torturing experiences. It remains content with the exercise of carnal inclinations. It lulls itself in temporary and shallow pleasures, no matter how disappointing and short their duration. The activity of an awakened soul like mine is a volcanic eruption, seeking extension and actuated not for the display of the gigantic beauty it represents, but as a result of an inevitable necessity. I can

no more stop my thinking than I can stop the rotation of the earth. I feel the strong hand of the unknown which governs my inclinations and am forced to follow its command to the limit. In doing this I am certain I am doing my best.

"After the long and exhaustive meditations which have consumed my soul this many a year, when I now ask myself to what conclusion have I come in regard to the object of my researches, the following is clear to me, namely: That *all of our conceptions based upon those adopted from the Jewish writers and traditions are entirely and purely human*. Men, by the force of limitations, cannot conceive anything but things which are accessible to them. Moses and the rest of the reformers who followed him were undoubtedly men of great distinction; nevertheless they remained human and were subjected to the same laws of nature which govern us today.

"The manifestation of the Absolute may not represent any impossibility to the Absolute itself, but it certainly represents an impossibility in its reflection upon the limited intellectual powers of man, for whose benefit the Invisible has to become visible, the Absolute—relative. A finite cannot see and talk to the Infinite, not because of the limitations of the latter but because of those of the former, who is finite. The Absolute cannot make itself visible to man in the way narrated by the Jewish prophets. In order to do this the Absolute must cease to be such and make itself finite to be visible to man, for it cannot be at the same time an *Absolute* and a *relative*. Such an alternative is the greatest absurdity. A man cannot make himself an ant; how can the Absolute make itself a man? Can-

not the Absolute without lowering itself to the form of the finite make itself visible to man by raising him, or rather giving him such particular aptitude as to enable him to see the Absolute? The speculation as to what the Absolute can or cannot do is equivalent to the definitions we ascribe to the same. Knowing not the Absolute, how can we know what it can or cannot do? The conception that the Absolute can do things which we cannot does not warrant the conclusion that it can do things which we think it can. If only our philosophy in matters other than human can cease to be human, we certainly will acquire different views in regard to the things we know not.

"We have plenty of men in our day who see God and receive revelations. They say so, just the same as others have said so before. They may be perfectly honest in what they say, yet the fact remains that they, being human, cannot see or know anything that is not human. Conceptions which they undertake to represent as coming from God they have to clothe with a terminology which passes the limits of human understanding. The moment this occurs, we may rest assured that they are giving their followers a set of conceptions which they themselves cannot understand, nor can they make others comprehend. Once a thing is non-understandable, it is non-applicable, therefore utterly useless. If it is understandable, then surely it is human, for men can understand only things which are human. It follows that all we know, no matter to whom we ascribe its origin, is human; the only humiliating feature lies in the fact that conceptions as they come in their crudity from the men of many thousand years ago are so clumsy, absurd, and even idiotic

that a rational man of today is seriously hampered in owning them. Fortunately, the crudeness and barbarity of those conceptions somewhat disappear under the cultured forms which an advanced age has given them. Nevertheless, they remain a set of antiquated views, by which the advanced man of today decidedly cannot be governed. The more I think, the clearer and firmer my conclusion that all our conceptions of God and His deeds of justice, virtue, good, and evil, in brief all that we profess knowing presumably from the dictation of a superhuman agency, are nothing but human, originated by the men of the past and propagated by those of the present. This happens not because there is nothing besides the human, but because men can understand only the things which are accessible to the human mind."

Here ends the manuscript of the reverend Dr. Stuart, which was written by him at the time when his whole being was absorbed in contemplation of the subjects so eminently important to him, and which occurred several years before he assumed the duties of a rector in the city of Los Angeles. The man who wrote the above is decidedly different from the man we found in the library, inasmuch as the latter represents views which are radically orthodox and in opposition to the conclusions he had arrived at while analyzing the basic principles of his creed. And yet this Dr. Stuart who preaches the orthodox doctrine of the Anglican Church is the same Dr. Stuart who wrote the above given manuscript. By what reasoning and what philosophical ruling he succeeded in effecting such a transformation of himself will be narrated in the following chapters.

CHAPTER III

OLD FRIENDS MEET

While Dr. Stuart was still absorbed in his reading, a young lady of charming appearance entered the library.

"There is a gentleman in the parlor who wishes to see you," said she, approaching the rector.

This was Miss Cecily Stuart, the youngest sister of the rector, who had been living with him since the death of her parents.

"A layman?" asked the rector, raising his head slightly.

"No, he is a clergyman. But he must be a stranger, for I never saw him before," answered she in a low tone.

Hearing this, Dr. Stuart arose, and putting the book he was reading on the desk, entered the parlor.

The clergyman who was waiting in the parlor was a classmate and bosom friend of the rector. From the day they first met and entered the seminary together, the mutual attraction between them was so strong that they at once became fast friends. During the period of their studies, they were inseparable companions. After graduation and ordination to the priesthood, the Reverend M. J. Howard—this was the name of the visiting clergyman—received his appointment in a country town while Dr. Stuart, as we already know, remained in the City of New York. Thus they were

separated, but belonging to the same diocese, as they did, they met quite frequently. However, as the years rolled on, and each became absorbed in the gradually increasing work of his respective parish, time became so valuable to them that they saw each other at rare intervals, and finally, owing to the extended trip of Dr. Stuart to Europe, the two old and cordial friends had not seen each other for several years before the latter came to California. Owing to this fact, the rector was sincerely glad to see his friend of long standing, now on a visit to the Golden State.

"This certainly is a most delightful surprise to me, Howard," said the doctor, warmly shaking the extended hand of his visitor. "I am so glad to see you here."

Dr. Stuart was a single man. Unlike the average youth of his day, he spent his time in constant study and meditation, preparing himself for the sacred calling he so cherished. Being devoted with all the powers of his heart and soul to this one object in life, he thought little of his personal comfort and pleasures. Besides he had two souls dear to him upon whom he bestowed all his tender care and affection. One was his youngest sister, whom he loved dearly, and whom we saw announcing the visitor, and the other his old nurse. These two ladies constituted his family, and he was perfectly happy with them.

"You have never met my sister Cecily; she is the dearest soul on earth. But you know my old nurse, Bessy. Both will be glad to see you, I am sure," said the rector, turning to the door to call the ladies in.

Soon the two ladies entered the parlor, and they were indeed glad to see the schoolmate of "Willy," as the rector was familiarly called. The old lady, bravely

bearing her three score years, and looking not much older than the rector himself, had nursed him while he was a child, being employed at the house of his parents when she was a young girl. Afterwards she married, but lived with her husband only a few years. Having lost her mate and learning that her "Willy" still remained a bachelor, she, being alone and not wishing to enter into another marital venture, applied to him to take care of his household. Thus Mrs. Whitehall, known in the family only by her first name, Bessy, entered the home of Dr. Stuart in the capacity of housekeeper. Being sincerely attached to them, she became a sort of mother to the reverend gentleman and his sister.

After a short though animated conversation on topics of former days, having dismissed the ladies, the two old and cordial friends assumed their habitual mood of communing.

"Now I would like to hear you," said Mr. Howard, taking his seat on the sofa. "The last time I saw you was in New York City. In my opinion you unnecessarily resigned your position in the parish in which you labored for years. You made that parish what it is today, a flourishing and splendidly growing congregation. But of course you had reasons best known to you, and you went abroad. Since that day I have heard nothing of you. Knowing you well, as I do, I was inclined to think that your trip to Europe would eventually effect a change in your determination not to enter the parish work again, and it seems I was not mistaken, for here you are, building and extending the organization of another parish."

"Yes, indeed," said the doctor, adjusting himself in

his chair. "I am at my parish work again. But had you known the experiences I went through which forced me to take the steps I have taken in coming back to my former work, you would not be so surprised. Oh! dear, dear, looking at you I am reminded of a number of years that were so pleasant, so promising. Alas, we can not always remain children. We were bound to grow and we are still growing. However, before I tell you about myself, I would like to know something about you."

"My life, as you know, always has been very prosaic," answered Mr. Howard modestly. "There is nothing in it that might interest anyone. For after all, what is the life of a parish priest? The most glorious achievement that he can attain consists of following day after day the established routine of a parish life. It is different with you. You always were a thinker, a philosopher. You carry in yourself a whole world of your own. You suffer and agonize in your own thoughts; but you also rejoice when your tortures are over. I sincerely envy you, for I know what a blessing it is to be able to elevate yourself above the level of everyday life, even if such a departure be the precursor of an extreme anguish. Now tell me about your philosophy. Are you still trying to understand the non-understandable?"

"Far from it, my dear friend," answered the doctor thoughtfully. "That question is settled in my mind, once and forever. The non-understandable, which is so prominently brought into display by our theologians, has ceased to be an enigma to me. There is no use in trying the impossible, nor is there any necessity for it. You know well you are the only man who knows my

innermost thoughts, hence the perfect freedom in my utterances to you. You said that in your estimation I committed an unnecessary and perhaps a foolish act in resigning from my parish in New York City, ignoring the state of mind I was in when I did so. I was tired, exhausted, and disgusted with all that surrounded me. My tortured soul was in constant agony. I was mercilessly struggling with myself every moment I was alone. I had no choice. Either I had to go away and give a rest to my agonized mind or aspire to candidacy for an insane asylum. I chose the first and I am glad I did so, for today you find in me a new man, leading a strenuous life, working harder than ever."

"I am doubly glad to know this," said Mr. Howard enthusiastically; "first for your own sake, and second for the sake of the church you consecrated your life to. However, knowing your way of thinking, I feel safe in concluding that your views must have been subjected to a considerable alteration since the day of your departure from New York. Of this I would like to hear. You know how I love to listen to you when you put the wheels of your reasoning in motion. But, by the way, am I detaining you from any of your daily duties?"

"Not at all. Today is my day at home, and for my use only. Owing to this fact I am intensely happy in having you with me, and will gladly review with you the experiences I had during those few years which followed our separation. But in order to do this comfortably, let us pass to my study. Somehow or other I can think better when I am in my library. By the way, there is only one chair there, so let me take another for you." Saying this, both gentlemen entered

the library. Dr. Stuart offered the chair he brought in to his friend and took his seat in his own, standing in front of his desk.

"You said that you loved to listen to my reasoning," resumed Dr. Stuart. "That I never doubted, for were I not convinced of your sympathy and fondness for me, I would not have displayed my most intimate thoughts before you the way I used to in the past. But since those days, my dear friend, things have been changed considerably, and today I do not know whether you would listen to me as lovingly as in the days of the past. However, let us come to the point. Do you remember the contents of my manuscript I gave you to read before I left for my trip to Europe?"

"Yes, indeed," responded Mr. Howard. "The lucid dissertation you wrote impressed me so vividly that nothing can efface it from my memory. What I wish to know now is whether you still adhere to the conclusions you made in that little manuscript of yours. If so, are you sure you are not erring?"

"Erring we will be, my dear Howard, as long as we are human, for we necessarily carry our limitations with us incessantly," answered Dr. Stuart thoughtfully. "No matter how much we know today and how strong our arguments may appear to be, when confronted with the phenomenal growth of humanity and subjected to the scrutiny of the future, the past is always found defective. But when we come to the present, which we are facing today, by using a sound and unbiased judgment we certainly are entitled to a sound conclusion. The longer I think of my conclusions of which you speak, the stronger is my conviction of their verity."

"They may be so to you, but will they serve as convincingly to others?" remarked Mr. Howard. "I have no doubt you are aware of the fact that you are facing a problem of immense import. Men are entitled to poetry and philosophy. But the poetry and philosophy of one individual do not represent an authority to the majority of people. This you know as well as I do. While I find your reasoning strong, very strong indeed, I would like to have a more tangible ground for it, such as would appeal to an ordinary mortal like myself. You know I am not a philosopher, and there are millions like me. You need to come down from the heights of your philosophical reasoning to the first elementary principles such as we were taught in school. Your dissertation on the impossibility of knowing the Absolute may perhaps appeal to some people, but in my opinion they are mighty few. But when you consider that what you have said against such possibility is a mere trifle when compared with what others have said in its favor, you certainly are forced to acknowledge your defeat. *Nec Hercules contra plures*, my friend. You are facing a multitude of deep thinkers representing many ages. They have taken for their ground the solid volume of Scriptures. There is the beginning, and there you have to start your issue if you wish to be understood by the masses."

"Ah, the solid volume of Scriptures," repeated Dr. Stuart, sighing deeply. "You better say the solid volume of traditions of our ancestors, for as you know, the solidity of the Scriptures rests solely on the compact made by those who thought they needed a solid and uniform ground for the solidity of their own *status quo*. This we all know well if we know anything at all

of the past, but, alas, we have not the courage to say so."

"To say what?" inquired the divine.

"To say that the volume of Scriptures as an authoritative source came into existence solely by force of the agreement of the fathers of the church, and not by virtue of a supernatural agency as we claim the case to be," answered Dr. Stuart.

"By the agreement, you say? But that agreement was only to define—"

"Yes, indeed," interrupted Dr. Stuart; "it was to define which of the Scriptures were authentic and which were apocrypha or spurious; in other words, which were right and which were wrong. O what an undertaking! At any rate a very interesting procedure indeed! However, permit me to take you for a moment to the epoch when those holy men, the fathers of the church, accomplished this wonderful work of selection. It is an era of great transformations. The Roman Empire as a whole as well as the single provinces and communities are subjected to it. Paganism is dying its natural death. Its last emperor, Constantine the Great, whose inherent paganism could not be overcome by the newly-adopted Christian diplomacy, has irrevocably left Rome, the seat of his predecessors. He is building up a new capital on the Bosphorus, between the two seas. The old Byzantium has assumed the name of its master. This change of the seat of the governing powers does not disturb anybody, for the maxim, 'Where the Emperor is, there is Rome,' is now very popular. Rome, the eternal city, the great arena of the bloody drama enacted during many hundreds of years, finally is casting away one by one its numerous gods, and, although

very gradually, is submitting itself gracefully to the incoming new régime. It ceases to be the seat of emperors, but it is becoming that of a succession of Christian bishops. Sylvester the First is supreme. The title of 'Pontifex Maximus' now belonging to the emperor is assured to his successors. The ground is laid for the future Holy Roman Empire, which, after the vicissitudes and ravages of many centuries, breathed its last breath with the resignation of its imperial crown by Francis the Second, Emperor of Austria, which took place only one hundred years ago, in 1806.

"Among the Jews, the state had rested upon religion. Among the Romans, religion had been an integral part of the political constitution, a matter far more of national than of personal feeling, for in the Roman jurisprudence, as you know well, *jus sacrum* is a branch of *jus publicum*.

"Thus, owing to the transformations which now are taking place, 'suddenly called from danger and ignominy to the seat of power and finding her inexperience perplexed by a sphere of action vast and varied, the Christian Church is compelled to frame herself upon the model of secular administration. Where her own machinery is defective, as in the case of doctrinal disputes affecting the whole Christian world, she seeks the interposition of the sovereign; in all else, she strives to reproduce for herself the imperial system. And just as with the extension of the empire all the independent rights of districts, towns, or tribes had to disappear, so the primitive freedom and diversity of individual Christians and local churches must finally be overborne by the idea of one visible Catholic Church, uniform in faith and ritual: uniform, too, in her relation to the

existing civil power.' But to accomplish successfully an undertaking of such an immense import, the rising Church of Rome must first conquer the Orient, the cradle of Christianity, which just now we find in full blaze of turmoil. Its peace is greatly disturbed by the continual dissensions and endless disputes on matters of faith. The African controversy, the schism of Donatists, the Trinitarian controversy, the heterodox opinions of Arius, called Arianism, the Tritheism, the Sabellianism, the minor differences on matters of faith and discipline among the localized eastern and western churches, and a mass of other questions, partly of political, partly of religious nature, are causing such a disturbance in Christian communities that even the all-powerful imperial will, inclined to support the claims of Sylvester of Rome, is totally powerless. When we study attentively and without prejudice the cause of this deplorable state of affairs, we find quite clearly that they are due solely to the fact that each and all of these churches have a set of traditions of their own, which constitutes the basis of their creed. They are not the churches of Scriptures, decidedly; they are the churches of traditions.

"There is a quantity of so-called 'Holy Scriptures' circulating amongst them. Occasionally these are read to the gathered faithful, but the sole and main basis of their faith remains tradition, which, having originated through the instrumentality of purely local conditions, is far from being uniform. Hence the differences of opinion. Hence the endless litigation and bitter disputes of theologians. Thus, while the Orientals, notwithstanding the fact that they are at variance amongst themselves, claim to be the sole possessors of the pure

and original teachings of Christ, one of the fathers of the Latin church, the zealous Hilary, being the eye witness of these deplorable conditions and from the peculiar hardships of his situation inclined to extenuate rather than to aggravate the errors of the Oriental clergy, declares that in the wide extent of the ten provinces of Asia to which he had been banished, 'there could be found very few prelates who had preserved the knowledge of the true God.' *

"This very distinguished and saintly man, Hilary, the Bishop of Poitiers, in another place describes the epoch we are studying in language which needs no comment: 'It is a thing,' says he, 'equally deplorable and dangerous, that there are as many creeds as opinions among men, as many doctrines as inclinations, and as many sources of blasphemy as there are faults among us; *because we make creeds arbitrarily and explain them arbitrarily.* The Homooousion—consubstantial—is rejected and received and explained away by successive synods. The partial or total resemblance of the Father and the Son is a subject of dispute for these unhappy times. *Every year, nay, every moon, we make new creeds to describe invisible mysteries.* We repent of what we have done, we defend those who repent, we anathematize those whom we defend. We condemn either the doctrine of others in ourselves or our own in that of others; and reciprocally tearing one another to pieces, we have been the cause of one another's ruin." †

"Very sad conditions indeed," said Mr. Howard,

* De Synodis, sive de Fide Orientalium, C. 63, p. 1186 (edit. Benedict).

† Hilarius ad Constantinum L. I. C. 4, 5, pp. 1227, 1228.

when Dr. Stuart closed the volume of St. Hilary from which he had read the citation and laid it on his desk. "The observations of the French bishop are doubtless justifiable when we consider that even today we are witnessing more or less similar conditions. Just at this moment, while we are conversing here, the militant Baptists are having a veritable battle in Chicago. They are anathematizing a theologian of their own who had the audacity to write a book in which he said some things not altogether to the liking of those now in session in that city. We have all sorts of disputes on matters of religion continually. While I admit these facts, I fail to see the object you have in view."

"The object is," answered Dr. Stuart, "to refresh your memory on the subject and bring to your attention the fact that Christian churches at that time, namely during the first centuries when primitive Christianity was flourishing, were governed by traditions and not by the Scriptures."

"But the Scriptures were there—"

"And many of them," resumed Dr. Stuart; "in fact there were a good many more than reported by our historians. Through long and tedious study and research in the writings of the fathers of the church, I discovered that there were in circulation during the first four hundred years of our era not less than *one hundred and seventeen books constituting the New Testament*, all of which were ascribed either to Christ Himself or His disciples. This seems incredible when we consider that we recognize only twenty-seven of them. When we were in the seminary, we did not know about this. We were told that there were some spurious gospels, but we were not told that these supposedly

spurious ones were considered by many of the Oriental churches during the first four centuries as being as authentic as those which we now accept as such. My researches disclosed the following fact: that out of the one hundred and seventeen books, twenty-seven gospels, seven acts of apostles, seven individual acts of several apostles, five revelations, and twenty-one under the name of epistles, preachings and books, a total of sixty-seven, have altogether disappeared, and were it not for the writings of the early fathers who in various of their works speak of these books, we would not have known of their existence. Twenty-three of the number known today as spurious books are still extant, and they are contained in the little volume you see on my desk. Add to these the twenty-seven now in use in our churches, and you will have the total of one hundred and seventeen books originally constituting the New Testament. But this fact that there were as many sets of Scriptures as there were centers of learning at that time did not annoy anybody, for, as I said, the Christian churches in those days were governed principally by traditions. Even today the oldest Christian church emphatically adheres to the same principle, declaring that she is the church of traditions and not that of Scriptures. Owing to this fact this very church, the Roman Catholic, does not encourage her faithful to read the Scriptures, although these are read regularly in their churches by the clergy. On the contrary, in Catholic countries laymen are forbidden to read them, and the consequence is that in the whole Catholic Europe and South America as well, you will not find a Bible in a private house, as you do in this country of ours; and if you do find

one, by examining the book you will readily discover that it is the work of the Protestant Biblical Associations. The reason given for such a prohibition is that the laymen, not being technically trained for the understanding of the Scriptures the way the teaching church understands them, are exposed to a dangerous experience, for instead of being edified by the old Writ, they are apt to be scandalized by the narrative and language of that book—which is only true. The churches of the Scriptures are comparatively a new institution. They came into existence, as you know, with the reformation inaugurated by the ex-Augustinian monk, Martin Luther, the founder of all Protestant churches. But let us go back to our main object.”

“Which is—” asked Mr. Howard.

“The conquest of the churches of the Orient by the church of Rome,” answered Dr. Stuart. “As I said, it was the desire of Sylvester, Bishop of Rome, to see the expansion of the church he claimed to be the head of go along with that of the newly reorganized empire, and this could be achieved only by a move which was as novel as it was potent. This desire was shortly realized when, by virtue of the pressure brought upon Constantine, the latter convoked the first Ecumenical Council held at Nicæa in Bithynia and opened on May twentieth in the year three hundred and twenty-five. The reunion of the representatives of Christian churches of the East and the West under the authoritative guidance of the imperial scepter, with the sole object of gaining an unanimous expression upon the subjects then in controversy, would certainly constitute a power, and once that power was formulated, the next step as to whose prerogative its exercise

would become would be a much easier task to decide. The filial submission of the newly-converted Emperor, his natural partiality to Romans, and his personal liking for Sylvester would do the rest, and the conquest would become an accomplished fact; and this was done. The three hundred and eighteen bishops, having at their head Hosius, Bishop of Cordova, with the two Roman priests, Vitus and Vincentius as the legates of Sylvester, Bishop of Rome—"

"Pardon me," interrupted Mr. Howard, a little agitated; "Hosius and the two priests never presided over the general council of Nice. They might have been there, but Sylvester of Rome had nothing to do with that council."

"But the sixth general council held at Constantinople in 680 expressly declared that the Nicene Council was convened by the Emperor Constantine and Sylvester, Bishop of Rome, who by virtue of this fact had his legates as presiding officers when the emperor was not present during the hours of deliberation of the council. Besides, the documents of that council show that they are invariably signed first by the mentioned legates as presiding officers, and then follow the signatures of the rest of the bishops present."

"Why, this is a version fabricated by the historians of the Roman Church," exclaimed Mr. Howard discontentedly. "We cannot admit such a stupendous falsehood as that in the history of the church. You know well that our historians emphatically deny it."

"Yes, indeed. I know too well what they say," resumed Dr. Stuart; "but I also know that were our historians to agree with those representing the interests of the Roman Church, they would not be Protestants."

This fact alone shows how shallow is our ground when we deal with the history of the church, and yet it is not the history that should be blamed; it is our partiality that should be taken into consideration. According to the Roman Catholic historians, everything was made to suit the Roman Pontiff. Nay, the Almighty Himself created this world of ours for the sole purpose of having him the supreme ruler and regulator of it, for they claim that the Pontiff has an unlimited power upon heaven and earth. But of course from our point of view they are all wrong. It is not theirs, but our history that is correct. Roman pontiffs are self-appointed usurpers, and their historians the unscrupulous interpolators of history. You see now that my object is not to establish the supremacy of the Pope. I mentioned this controversial episode simply as a matter pertaining to that particular time of history which we have now under discussion. However, to shorten my review I will omit the main object of that council, which was the suppression of the Arian heresy, the schism of Meletius of Egypt, and the settlement of the differences about the proper time for celebrating Easter. What I want to call to your attention is the fact that incidentally that council had also to settle the question of the authenticity of the books constituting the New Testament."

"What?" exclaimed Mr. Howard indignantly. "You seem to have in your possession information that is entirely new to me. When we were in the seminary, we did not know anything about the settlement of the authenticity of the New Testament by that council."

"How could we? We were taught only such things as would make us good Anglican priests," answered Dr.

Stuart jestingly. "Nevertheless, the fact remains that the first attempt at selection was made by that council. Here I have an account of a book entitled 'Libellus Synodicus,' called also 'Synodicon of Pappus,' which contains brief notices of one hundred and fifty-eight councils of the first nine centuries and comes down to the eighth Ecumenical Council. This book was brought from the Morea in the sixteenth century by Andreas Darmasius and bought by Pappus, a theologian of Strassburg, who for the first time edited it with a Latin translation. It was afterwards transferred to the collection of the councils. Hardouin had it printed in the fifth volume of his 'Collect. Concil.,' p. 1496, and Mausi separated its various parts and added them to the various synods to which they belonged. According to this account, this book, the 'Synodicon,' which undeniably is of great historical value, for otherwise it would not be cited by those who are authorities on the history of the councils, contains a statement to the effect that it was during the deliberations of the Council of Nice that forty gospels—according to my investigation there were only thirty-one, all of which were attributed to the apostles and which were then in circulation—were brought to be examined. After a long and tedious debate, the fathers of the council agreed that many of them were spurious, but they could not decide as to which the authentic ones were. According to the narrative, the fathers of the council then decided to submit the selection to a miracle. The books, forty in number, were placed under the main altar of the cathedral in which the council held its deliberations. Fervent prayers were offered, and the following morning *four*

of the *forty* were found on the altar, and these were accepted as the authentic gospels, actually and truly written by the four evangelists."

"What a ridiculous story!" said Mr. Howard, taking the book containing the account from the hands of Dr. Stuart to examine. "Who ever can believe such a statement as this? We all know that nothing of the kind happened at the Council of Nice. Discussion on that subject was held at the Council of Laodicea, in Phrygia, A. D. 363, when the canonical books were enumerated. The same thing occurred at the plenary Council of all Africa in the city of Hippo, Aurelius (Archbishop of Carthage) presiding, which was held in 393 of our era, and in several other councils, but there was nothing of the sort at the Council of Nice, for there is nothing said in the canons of that council to justify the statement."

"I am only repeating what the 'Synodicon of Pappus' says," resumed Dr. Stuart. "But actually it matters very little whether such procedure took place at that council or not. The fact is that we have a set of spurious gospels, and another of authentic ones. The fact also remains uncontested that owing to prevailing opinions of contradictory tendencies at various times and various councils, the fathers of the church were forced to indicate which of these were authentic and which spurious. In doing this they used such judgment as they had at their disposal, and this was as limited as it was conditional with their times and the conceptions they had of the subject on hand; and above all, the judgment they exercised was only human. It was solely by this agreement of the early fathers that the Scriptures now in use assumed the authenticity we

attach to them. The seeking of uniformity in a set of Scriptures as well as in traditions was not an idle fancy. It was a necessity for growing Christianity. *'The canon of the Scriptures rests on the combined judgment of the early churches,'* says a writer of the canons, and this is only true. We are an institution of compacts made and formulated by men. The Jewish Sanhedrim agreed upon one set of the old books, and those came to us under the name of Septuagint. St. Jerome made the Vulgate for the Roman Church, and Martin Luther made another one for us."

"Supposing they did so, what conclusion do you derive from that fact?" inquired the divine.

"A conclusion which emphatically contradicts your assumption," resumed Dr. Stuart. "In order to make my views legitimate, you propose that I should take for the basis of my reasoning what you call the *solid volume of the Scriptures*. In presenting a series of complications in connection with the accuracy and authenticity of the Scriptures, I intend to bring to your attention the fact that the volume of the Scriptures is not as solid as you claim it to be. The laymen of our day and even the majority of the clergymen, especially those who exercise their clerical duties for the salary they receive, take it for granted that the set of Scriptures now in use in our churches came to us intact, like a registered letter we receive from our friends, ignoring the fact that during many centuries these Scriptures were subjected to manipulations actuated and governed by the partisan views then in vogue, which did not fail to mark their stamp on the whole. Any work of literature, no matter of what origin and what tendencies, when subjected to a series

of revisions and corrections, necessarily must lose its originality and become conventional. We see and read quite often the revised editions of the Scriptures. Yes, indeed, they have been revised too often. Cardinal Franzlin, an eminent theologian, in his erudite treatise on the Scriptures, devotes one long chapter to the discussion as to whether it is a *comma* or a *period* that divides and regulates an important sentence in one of the Gospels. Reading carefully this superb work of that eloquent rhetorician, one cannot help noticing that a *comma* in the sentence in question is as dangerous to the views of his church as a *period* in its place would be to that of the Protestant churches. But of course the *period* and the *comma* are as necessary for the solidity of the Scriptures as is the canon which enumerates the books constituting the Holy Writ, and as the latter wholly belongs to the work of the selection so gloriously achieved by the fathers of the church, so does the former. These are the inevitable accessories which make the solidity of the Scriptures. To me it is clear that we are, as I said before, an institution of compacts formulated and made by human ingenuity and not that of any superhuman being."

"Admitting what you say is true, it does not interfere with the divine origin of the Scriptures," remarked Mr. Howard. "No matter what the fathers of the church did, the fact remains that they did not write the Scriptures."

"How do you know that?" inquired the Doctor.

"By your own testimony," answered Mr. Howard. "You just said that the fathers of the church made the selection of canonical books, which implies that the books were in existence long before the selection took

place. Besides, we know by the character of the writings that the Scriptures were written under the guidance of divine inspiration and by the men whom the Almighty selected to do the work. Hence it is clear that the Scriptures possess their merit by virtue of their divine origin and not by that of a compact made by the fathers of the church, whether in regard to *comma*, *period* or the *canon itself*."

"This is the way we were taught in the seminary," said Dr. Stuart thoughtfully, "and this is the way we teach others. But a little analysis of what you said will throw different light on the subject. I will not discuss the question as to who wrote the books constituting the Old Testament. It matters very little whether the name of a given writer is Moses or Jeremiah, although, in my opinion, for very strong reasons I believe that the books in question were not written by the putative writers."

"I beg your pardon," interrupted Mr. Howard, "but I think it is of great importance to know by whom these books were written. When you say that they were not written by the men to whom we attribute the writing, you certainly must have some ground for it. On what facts, if there are any, do you base your assertion? Will you tell me?"

"The facts which force me to make such a statement are contained in the books themselves," answered the doctor. "These are so varied and so numerous that it will take a great deal of time to discuss them one by one. Suffice to say that these books contain either events of many hundreds of years before the writer was born, or those which occurred long after the death of the supposed writer of a given book. While the

former is admissible, provided the given information is derived from reliable sources (which is not the case), the latter certainly constitutes a self-evident proof that those particular books could not have been written by the named authors. What would you think of a modern historian who described events which took place long after his death? Rather ridiculous when the narrative purports to be of a serious nature of which the writer claims to be the witness,—and yet this is a case which can be found only in the Bible. Besides, there is another set of events, narrated by two different authors, regarding which the statements when compared so conflict as to make the whole of it a fabulous story. Again there are books in the Old Testament which undoubtedly are of other than Jewish origin and decidedly by unknown authors. The book of Job, a poem, so different from the rest, belongs to those, and the book of Proverbs, which carries its own evidence in itself, being the work of Lemuel, the Gentile king, and not of Solomon, the Jewish king. But, as I said, this question as to who wrote the books, I place among those of minor importance. However, when we face the problem of the character of the writings, we have to take it as the only ground which ought to decide whether those books are of divine or human origin. As for myself, I firmly believe that the books which we call Holy Scriptures and which came to us from the Jewish people, are unquestionably of human origin. God could not have been the dictator of the writings of a set of books full of inaccuracy, contradictions, crimes, and rapines. Besides, God, being an *Absolute*, could not have been seen or known by any living man in any shape or manner, for the simple

reason that man is finite and as such cannot conceive the Infinite. This is simply an impossibility which no human power can ever remove. Of this I have said enough before to make my standing logically definite."

"But, my dear friend," said Mr. Howard, "you must remember that there was no necessity for the writers of the Holy Scriptures to see God face to face, a distinction which was not granted to all men even if they were prophets. All they had to do was to submit their senses to the inspiration, and write whatever God dictated to them."

"How do you know that this was the case?" inquired the doctor.

"Why, we know by the testimony of the very writers of the books—"

"And that is where the argument fails," retorted Dr. Stuart. "Now should I tell you that I wrote that little dissertation of mine which you read, by inspiration; in other words, should I say, 'Howard, what I wrote was dictated to me by God,' would you believe me? Of course not. And why? Simply because, first: the contents of my writing, of which the sum total is that our religion is strictly and purely of human origin, does not agree with your orthodox views. Second: because I am not a Jew. And third: because neither myself nor my writing belongs to the age of many thousand years ago. And yet, in writing what I did I was as sincere and as earnest as any honest man under the sun can be. The only difference that can be detected between the men of today who think and write and those of the days of the Jews, consists in the fact that while we think and write, we exercise our judgment according to the reasoning in our power, and

they did according to their power. It is altogether a matter of the conceptions we have of the subject we think of and write about, and those conceptions are not anything imaginary, for they are the inevitable result of our reasonings. The Jews wrote things as they saw them, and because they thought the way they saw things was far above the ordinary in those days, they named it *inspiration*. I think and write the way I see things, but no matter how deeply I am convinced of the superior merits of my views, I cannot call it inspiration, simply because I know that my conclusions are based solely upon the workings of my reasoning, and that reasoning decidedly cannot be called inspiration. Musicians write their sonatas, oratorios, and operas by inspiration. Poets write their verses also by inspiration. Take the word *inspiration* as you may, the mere statement of writers of Scripture, or of others, that they wrote their books, by inspiration, meaning by the dictation of a superhuman agency, does not constitute an argument: and this we have to dismiss altogether on the ground that whatever man does, he does it in conformity with the laws governing him, and this cannot be anything else but human. The only thing that remains for us to consider is the character of the said writings. Now then, let us first take the character of the Old Testament. What do we find in that book as a whole? I intend to be very brief and to the point. In the first place we find the description of the creation of the world. In this the Jewish people were not the first nor the last. There are other nations who have been in the business of making the world, and each of them made this world of ours according to the conception they had as to how

the world had to be made. But when we consider the biblical conception which we claim as our own, we are facing a problem of utter ignorance of the laws governing our planetary system, a conception which, described as it is in a puerile fancy, contains a multitude of incoherent and contradictory sentences. While this may be in perfect accord with the conceptions of the people living many thousand years ago, it does not reasonably agree with the conceptions emanating from and formulated by the empirical truths we possess today. And, pray, what do we learn from that? Nothing that can either enlighten or edify our generation. Second, we find most of the books devoted to the narrative of the history of the Jewish nation, which is replete with murders, rapines, and all sorts of unspeakable and abhorrent crimes, which only a people of the long-forgotten past was able to perpetrate. What do we learn from the fact that there was a father bestial enough to prostitute his own daughters; brother, the son of a king, prostituting his own sister? What do we learn from the fact that there was a king who was witty, vainglorious, dissolute, above all lascivious, and at last melancholy? He had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines. He lived fast and died, tired of the world, at the age of fifty-eight years. This worn-out debauchee, looking back on scenes he can no longer enjoy, before he dies cries out pathetically, '*All is vanity!*' No wonder, after such a life as he lived! In order to perpetuate the dissolute and utterly corrupt life of this king, we have attributed to him, one whole book of the most shameful and lascivious songs at the pages of which no decent man ever can look without blushing. A

pretty thing for our young men and women to read,—and this is a specimen of the book inspired by God! And, pray, what do we learn from all of these rascalities? Utterly disgusting and most horrible crimes, such as *sodomy* and *onanism*, we find only in that book which we call holy. In order to explain the meaning of these words our dictionaries have to cite the Old Testament. I said I intend to be brief, so I will not go any farther to bring out the most horrifying characteristics of that book, but I will tell you of an episode of our times which fairly well illustrates the contrast of ages and the conceptions that necessarily follow them. When Émile Zola, a French novelist, not many years ago published his famous ‘Nana,’ a story of a fallen woman (which, by the way, in a short period of a few years had eighty-four editions, the book having spread all over Europe), the Austrian government peremptorily prohibited the sale of that book in the limits of that empire. This measure was incited by the desire to preserve and protect the sense of morality. The men at the head of that country thought, and quite justly, that a book describing in such a graphic way as presented by the French novelist the immoral and disgustingly corrupt life of a prostitute, was not fit to be found in the homes of their countrymen. Having heard a great deal of that book, and wishing to know to what extent the Austrian Solons were justified, I read it. To tell the truth, with all my senses of a puritan, I did not find Zola’s ‘Nana’ half as scandalous as some portions we find in the Old Testament. If ‘Nana’ is not fit to be found in the homes of decent people, I do not see how I could recommend the old Jewish book.”

"Do you not think you are going too far, doctor?" inquired Mr. Howard, with the expression of a man stricken with horror.

"Not quite, for I intend to go a little farther," answered Dr. Stuart. "Can you deny the fact that the Old Testament is full of immoral and shameful stories?"

"It depends upon how you take them. But the idea of your comparing the Holy Writ with a corrupt novel of some dissolute French scribbler, is more than I could expect from you."

"But look here, my friend," said the doctor calmly. "Can you explain to me why crimes described by the Jewish writers seem to you less abhorrent and scandalous than those depicted by a French novelist?"

"I do not know anything about the Frenchman and his writing. But I do know you ought not to make such a comparison," replied Mr. Howard. "I am simply astonished at your language. You know well that the incidents quoted by you have their moral side and spiritual meaning, which, as presented by the eminent commentators of the Bible, contain much beneficial teaching. You have evidently forgotten the rule, that:

Littera gesta docet, quid credas Allegoria,

Moralis quid agas, quid speres Anagogia.

This is the way you have to read the Bible in order to understand it properly. Besides, those quotations do not constitute the substance of the book. There are pages and pages of beautiful and highly instructive thoughts, which undoubtedly indicate divine origin."

"But according to the teachings of our Holy Church, those quotations, scandalous and criminal as they are,

being a part and parcel of the book, are as much a work of inspiration as those pages which you claim contain beautiful and instructive thoughts, and consequently they also must be of divine origin," said Dr. Stuart. "Oh, dear, dear, how inconsistent we are! On one hand we condemn all acts that are criminal, and on the other hand we say the criminal stories of the Bible are of divine origin! A conception of this kind passes all the limits of sound logic. However, let me come to the kernel and substance of the argument. Let us for the moment be children, or rather let me be a child. Will you illustrate for me the workings of *inspiration* and tell me what you understand by the words *divine origin*—will you?"

"I do not see any necessity for illustration, for you know as well as I do that inspiration simply means that the writers of the Holy Scriptures wrote things which were dictated by God, hence the divine origin," answered Mr. Howard.

"In other words, the writers of the Scriptures got hold of their reed stem, or any other implement they used for writing, and wrote things which were not originated by them. They simply wrote what they thought was dictated by God, and this is how the Bible was originated. Is this what you mean?" inquired the doctor.

"Well, yes, that is the meaning of inspiration, for were the writings originated by the writers, there would be no place for divine origin," answered Mr. Howard.

"And that is another stupendous fallacy of the argument," said Dr. Stuart emphatically, "for in the first place, in order to write the Jewish history, which

undeniably is the main object of the Bible, they did not need any inspiration. What they needed was facts. These they wrote quite freely, brutally describing the barbaric deeds of their nation. Whether what they wrote was not dictated by the vanity of a shallow national glory, we will not discuss. However, when we come to that portion of the Bible which contains the law making and law promulgating, we are reminded that it was here that God exclusively dictated His holy will. But how dubious and piteously small the character of the supposed dictator is, we can readily see, when in one place He dictates *not to kill* and in another place He Himself mercilessly slays fifty thousand men on one occasion. (I Samuel 6:19). If in the wisdom of God the act of killing was intrinsically bad, therefore condemnable, as the commandment implies, no circumstances could justify its commitment. This being the case, how could He, without offending Himself, commit such an act? On the other hand, if God really and actually did destroy the lives of fifty thousand men, then the killing must be a godly act, therefore a good and wholesome one, for God, being good, cannot commit bad acts. Here probably you will argue—

“Yes, indeed,” interrupted Mr. Howard, “I will argue and say that the commandment ‘Thou shalt not kill,’ being given solely for the benefit of man, is applicable only to man, and consequently it cannot be a regulator of the acts of its Giver.”

“Well said, my friend, but not sufficiently strong to stand the attack,” remarked Dr. Stuart. “Your argument is one of the subtleties of our theological system which at times may silence a less refined

thinker. But how shallow its construction is you can readily perceive when you consider that by virtue of what you said, and having in view that you say this in order to justify the act of killing committed by God, you admit that God can be a subject to those very criminal acts which only a finite and wicked man is apt to perpetrate. Furthermore, you must consider that before the commandment was given to man the conception of its tenet must necessarily have been formulated in its Giver; in other words, had God not decreed to His own satisfaction that the act of killing was wrong, not solely because it was harmful to the man, but because it was contrary to the constructive principle of His own work, He could not have dictated a commandment to that effect. However, supposing that the commandment in question was and is applicable to the man only, as you say, what shall we think of the case where God, contrary to His own commandment, commands through his chosen men this very act of killing to be committed? Let me give you a passage to that effect.

“When the Jewish army returned from one of their murdering and plundering excursions, the account given in Numbers 31:13, reads as follows: ‘And Moses and Eleazer the priest, and all the princes of the congregation went forth to meet them without the camp; and Moses was wroth with the officers of the host, with the captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, which came from the battle; and Moses said unto them, *Have you saved all the women alive?* Behold, these caused the children of Israel through the council of Balaam to commit trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among

the congregation of the Lord. Now therefore, *kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that hath known man by lying with him. But all the women children that have not known a man by lying with him, keep alive for yourselves.*' Here is an order to butcher the boys, to massacre the mothers, and debauch the daughters, and this order comes from the very man, Moses, who brought the commandment '*Thou shalt not kill.*' How does this sound to your sacerdotal ear, Howard? Just one moment more. Since I have this Holy Book before me, let me give you another instance of the splendid magnanimity of the chosen men of Israel who performed the will of God. In the tenth chapter of the second book of Kings an account is given of two heaps of children's heads, seventy in number, being exposed at the entrance of the city—an exceedingly edifying picture for our humane societies to contemplate. They were the children of Ahab, and were murdered by the order of Jehu, whom Elisha, the pretended man of God, had anointed to be king over Israel on purpose to commit this bloody deed and assassinate his predecessor. And in the account of the reign of Menahem, in this very book, in the fifteenth chapter and sixteenth verse, we read that '*Menahem smote the city of Tipsah because they opened not the city to him, and all the women therein that were with child he ripped up!*' O mothers, mothers! will you ever forgive those who tell you these are the words of your God? I do not know how you feel after hearing of these heroic acts of the men chosen by God. As for me, I confess that a morbid sensation is taking hold of me. Look here, Howard, if these and the rest con-

tained in the Bible do not prove to you that that book is nothing but a medley of the most infamous misdoings of the Jewish people, then I have nothing to say. As to the question whether God had anything to do with this sort of hodge-podge of the children of Israel, I have this much to say: if all that we read in that book, whether pertaining to the historic, disciplinary, or moral portions of it, is really and actually dictated by God, then we must change our opinion of him. A God who prides Himself on being governed by human deficiencies and passions, and acts accordingly; a God who does not hesitate to say that he is a *jealous God*; furthermore, a God so ignorant of the laws of nature, so inconsistent, and above all so cruel and blood thirsty as presented by the writers of the Bible, cannot be, and most decidedly is not, the God of our conceptions."

"I agree with you," said Mr. Howard meekly, "that there are passages in the Old Testament which are not necessarily in harmony with the conceptions we have today. But I do not see why that should bother you at all. You know that it is not the Old, but the New Testament which constitutes the basis of our creed."

"Perfectly correct. But, oh! dear, dear, how unsophisticated you seem to be, Howard," exclaimed Dr. Stuart. "How could the New Testament exist if it were not for the Old? And what can you expect from a structure based upon such a shaky foundation as the Bible is? Let me tell you some of my experiences. You know I always had my Bible classes, which were attended exclusively by young men. The young women of my parish I always keep separate

under the direction and guidance of a woman teacher. There was in my class a young student who distinguished himself by his extraordinary ability for retaining a mass of Scriptural sentences by memory. He was a living concordance. This young man, whom I will call Mr. Percy, while religiously inclined, was very intelligent and consequently very critical and exceedingly observing. His hobby was logic. Nothing irritated him so much as a proposition devoid of logic. He had a sort of mathematical machine which he invariably applied to all things that came under his observation. One day this Mr. Percy came to my study, greatly perplexed, and said, in his modest way, that he was hopelessly puzzled by the genealogy of Christ as found in the Gospels, and wanted me to explain the matter. He had copied the one given by Matthew, and parallel with it he had the genealogy given by Luke. I cannot describe to you my embarrassment when I looked at the paper. Beginning with Christ and including David, Matthew has *twenty-eight generations*, and Luke enumerates *forty-three*, the most striking feature of it being the fact that except for the names of Christ, Joseph, and David, which are identical in both genealogies, each of the two evangelists gives different names to the rest of the generations. Thus according to Matthew the name of the father of Joseph was Jacob, and according to Luke it was Heli, and so on. The mere fact that this young man pointed out the evident contradiction between the two evangelists did not impress me so much as the following reasoning: 'Now suppose,' he said, 'my grandfather's name was George. He could not have been known under the name of John,

could he? There are only two evangelists who give the genealogy of Christ, the other two being silent on the subject. It occurs to me,' the young man continued, 'that if one is correct, the other certainly must be in error. Now the question arises, which one of them is correct?' On another occasion this young man began thus: 'The monumental tomb of General Grant in New York City,' said he, 'has an inscription above its portals which reads, "Let us have peace." Now supposing the days of the Yankee came to an end and some unimaginable nation got hold of New York City after having destroyed all its wonders, amongst them the monument of the former President, U. S. Grant. Some time having elapsed, two learned men of the new nation undertook to write the history of our great city of New York. While speaking of the buildings and monuments that had existed in the past, one of the historians stated that the inscription on the tomb of General Grant was: "Let us have peace," and the other said that the inscription was: "Let us end war." Now anyone can perceive that as far as it goes for the sense of the inscription both historians convey in substance the same meaning, for in order to have peace, one must first end war; but when it comes to the stating of facts and not fancies, as the duty of a historian requires, especially when such a one claims to be the eye-witness of the fact he relates (as the case is in the following example), then we must realize that only one of the two historians could be correct, if correct at all, and the other must necessarily be in error. Now I want to apply this ruling to the inscription on the cross upon which our Saviour was crucified. Matthew

says that the inscription was: "This is Jesus the King of the Jews." Mark reads it: "The King of the Jews." Luke has it: "This is the King of the Jews," and John states that the inscription was: "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." We see quite clearly,' he continued, 'that the four evangelists have as many versions of the inscription in question. They cannot all be correct. If one is correct, the other three must necessarily be mistaken. Now I wish you would tell me which one of the four is correct?'"

"I imagine your position when you had to answer such a question," said Mr. Howard, laughing heartily.

"That is not all," resumed Dr. Stuart; "the young man did not stop there; the next thing he launched was his hobby, logic. 'The church teaches us,' said he, 'that all that the Gospels contain was inspired by the Holy Ghost, and consequently all is true. If that be the case, according to the rules of logic every one of the four evangelists' reports is true. In admitting this fact, we are forced to admit that there must have been four different inscriptions on the cross instead of one. But unfortunately this admission does not agree with the statement of the four evangelists, who convey the idea that there was only one inscription on the cross. Now then,' he continued, 'as trivial as the case may appear to be, it certainly greatly disturbs the regular order of logic, and the procedure becomes a dangerous trial for the finding of the truth. If there was only one inscription, only one of the reports can be true, if true at all, and consequently the other three must necessarily be in error, and in that case the teaching of *inspiration* hopelessly loses its ground unless

we will admit that while they were inspired, they were not rendered incapable of committing errors. But this we cannot admit, for the church expressly teaches that all there is in the Scriptures is dictated by God, therefore there is no place for error. This is a problem,' ended the young man, 'which I have failed to solve; would you enlighten me on the subject?'

"What the substance of the explanation I gave him was, I do not now remember, but what I remember well is the fact that this same young man came to me time and again, and on each occasion presented to me the most striking contradictions found in the four Gospels. From this and many other similar experiences, I learned a valuable lesson, namely, how little I knew of the contents of the Gospel I was preaching. Like yourself and the rest of the honest clergy, I accepted the creed presented to me by my instructors and never doubted it. But as the inquisitive minds of our day go on searching in the Scriptures for a coherent and logical construction of their contents, guided by the analytical methods of our age, they discover things which we, the clergy, do not see. The fact that we do not see the most salient contradictions with which the Scriptures are replete is due solely to the other fact that we accept the Scriptures *a priori* as the expression of the word of God. This being the case, the failure to find a coherent and logical construction in the Scriptures as a whole we prefer to ascribe to our faculties of perception, which in this case we brand as defective, rather than to measure the supposed word of God by analytical methods such as used by less biased thinkers than we are. Hence our theological speculations to explain the unexplaina-

ble, or rather, our efforts to make the Scriptures say what we wish them to say. Are we honest in what we are doing? Yes indeed, we are, inasmuch as we believe that we are endeavoring to preserve the supposed word of God. But do we ever think in this day of ours whether we are justified in blindly accepting the clumsy Jewish folklore for the word of God? This is the question which seriously troubles the advanced man of today. However, resuming the narrative of my experiences, I must confess that a great deal of what I know today owes its origin to the inquisitiveness of those who were under my spiritual guidance."

"From which I conclude," said Mr. Howard, "that instead of your teaching them, they were teaching you. Were I in your place, I would not confess to such misconduct as that. But, by the way, what became of that young man of yours?"

"I am sorry to say he left the church," answered Doctor Stuart.

"That explains it," remarked Mr. Howard contentedly. "Men, young or old, when they want to leave the church will always find an excuse."

"But, my dear, it is not the excuse we are looking for. It is the stupendous fact that the four Gospels actually contradict themselves in many instances of great importance that we must consider," said Dr. Stuart earnestly. "While agreement does not always indicate that the subject agreed upon represents a truth, disagreement certainly does indicate the total absence of it. The fathers of the church agreed that we should celebrate the birth of Christ on the twenty-fifth day of December. Following the established custom, whether knowingly or unknowingly, we lead our

masses to the belief that the Christmas day of our celebration is the day on which Christ was born in Bethlehem over nineteen hundred years ago. You and I and the rest of the clergy deliver with unusual solemnity an appropriate sermon on that day to the effect that we are celebrating the anniversary of Christ's birthday. Now should I tell my parishioners the real truth, namely, that the twenty-fifth of December is a fictitious day, chosen and designated by the early fathers of the church to commemorate the nativity of Christ and that no living man in the past or present ever knew with certainty the date, month, or even the year in which our Saviour was born, what do you think would be the result? Would they not, following their first impulse, say—if we do not know the exact day of the birth of Christ, whence comes our certitude in regard to the events which took place on that occasion? Would not they start thinking by analogy, if thinking they can do at all, that if the Christmas day celebrated, as we do, on the twenty-fifth day of December is a fictitious day, a myth—which is only true—all teachings based upon this fact must be equally a myth? However, fortunately for them, our people are not given to thinking except on the subject which interests them most; namely, that of their daily bread. Following this instance, as you know, all the rest of our religious practices are based solely upon the agreements of the fathers of the church. This goes for established practices, but while an agreement of this kind, actuated by the necessity for a homogeneous and uniform ritual, in the course of time and by the force of antiquity assumes a legitimate standing, the other, tending to preserve intact the salient con-

tradictory statements contained in the four Gospels, becomes a powerful factor in demonstrating the untenability of the conveyed doctrines. Should we inquire into the matter as to why the fathers of the church, so anxious for the removal of all that possibly could cause a friction, have left those contradictory portions of the Gospels at the mercy of the speculative theologians, we will find that they were governed by exactly the same reason which forbids us to say aloud that Christmas day, Easter Sunday, the Circumcision, the Annunciation, the Ascension, the Assumption and many other days we celebrate, as events pertaining to the life and deeds of Christ, are fictitious. From these we see that we are not any firmer in basing our creed on the New Testament—meaning a set of practices and teachings which we now follow—than we would be had we chosen the Old one.

“However, let me come back to my personal experiences on the subject as a whole. There was a time when personal opinions of individuals on religious subjects did not bother me at all. I knew the tenet of my creed and that I taught zealously to those who were under my care. There came a time when to my great surprise I learned that there were individuals among laymen, often my hearers, who knew much more than I did, and I felt greatly embarrassed. I was afraid to meet the inquisitive eyes of those men who, as it were, were trying to fathom my innermost thoughts. Was it to detect whether I was sincere in what I was preaching? Sincere I was unquestionably; but then involuntarily I thought of an idiot who is also sincere in whatever he says, and began to realize that sincerity alone was not a suffi-

cient quantum for one who wishes to teach, and that he must necessarily have knowledge as well. This discovery forced me to equip myself with such information as would enable me in defending my creed to combat opponents with their own weapon. In order to accomplish this successfully, I decided to put aside all prejudices and hear and read opinions from all sources. It was while pursuing this inevitable method that I began to make discovery upon discovery purporting to show that the set of teachings I had acquired before and after my ordination to the priesthood was as much devoid of absolutism as it was human, and this, after years of earnest research and contemplation, led me to the conclusion already known to you,—namely, that our religion, deducted and based upon Jewish conception as it is, is entirely and wholly of human origin. God seems to be a plaything in the hands of those men who claim they were interpreters of His will. It does not require extraordinary mental ability to grasp that it was not God who spoke through the Jewish prophets, for God speaks in His creation through the laws governing the same, and such a God hardly needs to arbitrate with man in displaying his diplomacy in a series of covenants of which the Jewish prophets were so fond. It was the man, the ignorant, the barbarous, the criminal, the revengeful, the lascivious man, that put in the mouth of God his passions, his pleasures, his likes and dislikes, his conception of good and evil, and finally his wicked vindictiveness. This very man made his God see things the way he saw them. It was this identical man who, wishing to establish his superiority, flattered himself with the conception that he was the exclusive

handwork of God, made in His image and similitude. However, this conception was not an idle fancy; it was suggested to him by his own occupation. He had reached that stage of development which enabled him to make his utensils from clay, an achievement of which he was proud beyond expression, for it was the greatest ever known to him. He built his primitive and crude pots, and thought; but being on the lowest plane of mentality, and thinking relatively as he did, naturally he could not go farther than the limits of the little horizon which encircled his life would permit. Gradually, as he grew proficient in his occupation, he saw the fact that he was a *maker* of things which would not and could not have existed but for his ingenuity. In this he detected his similitude to his God, for it was then that he saw his God sitting on the stump of a decayed tree, moulding things out of clay the way he did, and the result was the making of the first man. Thus, having solved the main problem in regard to the origin of man, he busied himself about woman, a matter of far less importance in his estimation. Woman was a thing which belonged to him; she was his property, his slave, and as such an article of necessity to him. This he knew well, for it was an established fact in his mind. However, when the question arose as to whence and how she came into existence, he had no answer, but he knew for a certainty that woman, being a far inferior entity, could not have come into existence the way he did. God could not have troubled Himself to make such a thing as a woman, and if He did, certainly He could not have succeeded in making her without the instrumentality of man, whose slave she was destined to be. It was left to a more advanced

generation to develop this idea, which finally assumed the legendary form related in Genesis. Then came the wise serpent who, while defending his molested tail, stung the man culprit and made him suffer, thus establishing his reputation of being the source of all evil. *Quae nocent docent*, which in plain English means that we learn by painful experiences. So did the primitive man. In connection with these conceptions, the famous apple tree, so indispensable for the construction of the system, came into play, and lo! upon this tree was hung our destiny! If there had been no apples, there would have been no temptation, no downfall of man, and consequently no necessity for a series of prophets, patriarchs, popes, bishops, and finally for ourselves. We stay with the apple tree for the attraction it offers."

At this juncture Miss Cecily Stuart entered the library, announcing that one of the parishioners was in the parlor requesting the rector to baptize his newly born child, dangerously ill.

This unexpected incident interrupted the conversation. The zealous rector hurried to the sick child, and the Reverend Mr. Howard left the rectory.

CHAPTER IV

LET US BE ORTHODOX

It was late in the afternoon when the Reverend Mr. Howard returned to his lodging. So absorbed was he that when he left the rectory he instinctively sought solitude, preferring to walk through the less frequented streets leading to his destination in order to follow the train of his thoughts undisturbed.

The long and interesting discussion with his friend had impressed him deeply. It opened before him a new channel of thought, a new realm, hitherto utterly unknown to him. The views involved in it were as bold and precise as they were radically foreign to his mode of thinking. Yet while the lucid and logically correct arguments advanced by his former companion and fellow student in a manner that was as original as it was irrefutable, checked and paralyzed his objections, he could not forget the fact that the man who enunciated them was a regularly ordained priest, exercising the duties of a rector over a large Anglican parish. Owing to this fact, the attitude assumed by the doctor was decidedly mystifying. It defied the very principles of the creed he was expected to profess and challenged the most sacred teachings of his church. Still the standing he took decidedly was not that of a professional antagonist nor that of a man who, by a perverted method of reasoning artfully reproduced by the

fecundity of his inventiveness, seeks to silence his conscience in order to justify his personal misconduct. No, positively this was not the position Dr. Stuart ever could assume, for his exemplary life, his everyday deeds of charity and forbearance, his devotion to his flock, his self-abnegation, and finally his zeal and tireless efforts in performing his sacerdotal duties, amply and forcibly attested this. His was a disturbed and agonized soul in search of tranquillity and repose in the truth. This being the case, his arguments, otherwise impious and decidedly heterodox, nay heretical, were devoid of that poignancy and malignity which are the characteristic features of the spirit of opposition. The more he thought, the clearer it became to him that this was a problem of great import, inasmuch as it served to justify the motive of an honest and sincere man who unquestionably deserved the mature consideration even of the most obstinate conservative, for this was a case where the truth was the only object in view, the only element sought for. Reviewing one by one each point brought out in the discussion, Mr. Howard was forced to acknowledge that the orthodox creed, for the simple reason that it was a creed, for one who sought a clear understanding of its teachings was not and could not constitute an unimpeachable authority. Besides, a creed which could not stand an investigation *ipso facto* betrayed the untenability of its doctrines, and as such sooner or later was destined to perish. On the other hand, if the implicit acceptance of a creed in the name of the truth was good and commendable, how much more must the value of the explicit understanding of the truth itself be? But then, having arrived at conclusions of his own, how

could he harmonize his views with the practices imposed upon him by the position he held without endangering the value of the truth as he saw it? If he was right in his views, would it not follow that he was wrong in propagating a set of doctrines against which he had so much to say?

However, what impressed him most vividly was the fact that in the reflection of his friend he saw his own picture delineated so tangibly as to make him sense the penetrating truth conveyed by it. The doctor confessed to his limited knowledge of the gospel he was preaching: was not this true in his own case? Then an incident which had occurred in the past came to his memory. It was a sermon for Easter Sunday he was writing. He had chosen for his text Matthew 28:2, "*And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.*" The subject, being that of the resurrection of Christ, presented a theme that was at once fascinating and infinitely important, for it constituted the cornerstone upon which the structure of the Christian church stood. In order to make his sermon as highly effective in the descriptive portions of it as he wished it complete in argument, he carefully consulted theological works on the subject, and especially took into consideration the important testimony of the four evangelists, for, after all, it was only by their testimony that the resurrection of Christ could be sustained. However, great was his amazement and surprise when he found that each of the four evangelists had a different version of the event. The first and the most significant observation that impressed him deeply was the fact

that Matthew spoke of a *great earthquake* preceding the resurrection, of which event there was not a word in the narrative of the other three evangelists, nor was there a trace of it to be found anywhere else as far as he could ascertain. He could not explain how such an occurrence as an earthquake could have escaped the attention of those who were well informed from authoritative sources of the event in question, as the evangelists are supposed to be. How did it happen that Matthew knew of it and the other three evangelists did not know anything about it? For had they known, they could not have kept silence on such an important occurrence as the earthquake. Furthermore, not only did they not mention this imposing fact of the earthquake, but according to their account there was no angel sitting on the stone which he had rolled back; for Mark said that the angel was *within* the sepulchre sitting on the right side; Luke said there were *two* and they were both standing up; and John said that they were both sitting down, one at the head and the other at the foot. This discovery made him realize that the problem was a complicated one, so much so that when the testimony of the resurrection was taken, the four evangelists flatly contradicted each other, for Matthew said that *the angel that was sitting upon the stone on the outside of the sepulchre told the two Marys that Christ was risen*, and that the women went away quickly. Mark stated that the women, upon seeing the stone rolled away, went into the sepulchre, and that *it was the angel that was sitting within on the right side that told them so*. Luke asserted it was *the two angels that were standing up*, and John declared that *it was Jesus Christ himself who told it to*

Mary Magdalene, and that she did not go into the sepulchre, but only stooped down and looked in. Facing such an incongruity as this in the given testimony, the zealous preacher had found himself exceedingly embarrassed. In vain he essayed to harmonize all the evidence on the subject, and finally decided to abide by the chosen text of Matthew and not to mention the depositions of the other three evangelists. Singularly enough, if anything, it was this very fact that Matthew spoke of the earthquake that inspired him to choose the text mentioned. The earthquake preceding the resurrection! O what a powerful introduction to the sublime subject! The shaking and trembling of the earth; the demolition of buildings which naturally must have followed it; the distressing sight of the ruins; the general alarm and the frightful panic that ensued; all these events were imposing and exceedingly impressive accessories to the subject. The earthquake was a testimony of the whole of nature. Heaven and earth had combined their forces to announce the important event which marked the dawn of a new era to mankind. If there were no other testimony, this one was sufficient to establish the resurrection of Christ. These were the thoughts that were connected with the making of his sermon. Now that this occurrence of many years ago was brought back to his memory so vividly by the reflections of his friend, he began to realize the importance of the illustrations given by him. There was no room for a denial of the fact that contradictions were to be found in the Gospels. Was it not a pure and simple contradiction when the four evangelists each gave a different version of the event of resurrection, flatly contradicting each other? But

why did he not see this before? Why, while listening to the narrative of the experiences his friend had had with the young man whom he named Mr. Percy, did the whole story seem to him so amusing if not senseless? And now the picture of this very man and his inexorable logic stood before him menacingly and he began once more to review the arguments of his friend the doctor. But unfortunately, by this time his train of thought became so confused, hazy, and obscure that he was obliged to abandon all efforts to think in a rational way, and it was late that night when he finally lost himself in revery intermingled with a series of desultory and incoherent dreams which followed during the rest of the night.

At the appointed hour next day Mr. Howard, full of anxiety, made his appearance at the rectory.

"Glad to see you again, Howard," exclaimed Dr. Stuart, cordially shaking hands with his friend and conducting him to the library. "I am very sorry we were interrupted yesterday. It was a bad case with the child. Scarcely had I baptized him when he died, and when I returned home, I sincerely regretted your absence. But, by the way, you have not told me yet of your impression of our city. Are you pleased with your sojourn here?"

"More than pleased; I am simply charmed, for unquestionably yours is a most delightful city," answered Mr. Howard laconically. "But to tell you the truth, since I met you here, my friend, I have been absorbed in my thoughts to such an extent that I can hardly see anything around me. You have thrown me in a labyrinth of speculations which I confess depresses me rather bitterly. I was anxiously waiting for the hour

to see you again, expecting this time you would define your position more clearly and remove the cloud of doubt which hangs above it."

"You seem to be quite tragic about the matter," remarked Dr. Stuart. "I realize the importance of my utterances of yesterday, and this is why I told you that I did not know whether you would listen to me now as lovingly as in former days. But let us come to the subject systematically. If you have digested the sum total of our discussion, you certainly have formulated an opinion about it."

"After the experiences you have had on the subject, your question as to whether I have digested the sum total of our discussion of yesterday seems to me altogether out of order," answered Mr. Howard thoughtfully. "How could I digest in one night a mass of deductions which you have made during many long and tedious years? Of the discussion in question, being deeply impressed by it, naturally I thought a great deal; in fact I have been unable to think of anything else since, and I must confess, while I feel the weight of your arguments keenly, I cannot reconcile myself to the fact that as correct and logical as they appear to be, coming from you as they do, they seem to me entirely out of place. Have you ever thought of the destructive tendencies of your conclusions, doctor? Have you ever measured the boldness and unconventionality of the assertions you make? Did it occur to you to ponder and fathom the deplorable consequences which necessarily must follow, should you realize the falsity of the position you place yourself in? You reject totally and unconditionally the holy teachings of your mother church. But have you ever thought that the

moment you do this, you cease to be a priest, nay, you cease to be even a Christian?"

"Yes, indeed," answered Dr. Stuart calmly. "I thought and pondered all this very carefully years ago. When I discovered that I was irrevocably bound to accept my own conclusions as the only logical and rational deductions from what I knew and observed in the life and teachings of my church, I knew I had ceased to be a priest, inasmuch as I could not agree with the antiquated views propagated by her, and the result was my immediate resignation of the position I held in my New York parish and my departure for Europe. You knew at the time of my determination not to enter into parish work again, but you did not know the real cause of it, which was the fact that I did not wish to preach what I ceased to believe. This was a firm and irrevocable resolution of mine, but consequent experiences altered the situation considerably. It was during my stay in Europe and the Holy Land that I scrutinized my conscience severely and periodically. It was then that I asked myself time and again, was I not mistaken? Could I rely upon my own judgment, which after all might be as defective as those I condemn? Alas! in vain I essayed to silence the voice within me, which grew stronger as the days passed and proved to be more potent than the obvious reasons for submission to the old régime, and the result was that I had to abide by the conclusions already known to you and which I firmly profess to this day. This being the case, naturally you will ask me why I am exercising the duties of a minister of a church whose doctrines I have despoiled of their divine origin?"

"Exactly, that is the question I would like to have

you answer," exclaimed Mr. Howard earnestly; "for adhering to the views you have advanced, how can you wear any longer your black cassock, the emblem of your renunciation of the world and its wisdom? How can you look calmly at the white surplice you use during the divine services without remorse of conscience, it being the symbol of the integral purity and sanctity of the creed you are expected to profess? How can you place the stole on your shoulders, it being the figurative token of your filial submission to the authority of your mother church? Yes, indeed, how can you exercise the duties of a minister of God without disturbing the solidity, if not of the Anglican creed, of that which you attach to your personal convictions?"

"I see, my dear Howard, that the ecclesiastical poetry of which you always were so fond has not forsaken you, in spite of your strenuous life," answered Dr. Stuart calmly. "This is the way an obedient and faithful priest of the Anglican church speaks ordinarily, for the melancholy tuning of the argument does not fail to regulate the conduct of many a timid clergyman. But let us put sentimentalism aside and take up an argument that can stand the test. Of the well known fact that there are a great many clergymen in our church as well as in other churches who decidedly do not believe in all that they preach, I will not speak. We both have known men of that description, occupying high and low positions in the church, who still remain in the category of those of good standing and still preach what they do not believe in. Why so? There are various reasons. One, and the most common is, the problem of sustenance; in other words, daily bread. There are those who are hampered by lack

of self-reliance, and still others who are guided by so-called worldly prudence. How strong they are in their views, or how they reconcile themselves to existing conditions, we will not discuss, for this is a subject which will consume a great deal of our time and might divert us from our immediate theme. However, I mention this merely to say that they all wear cassocks, surplices, and stoles, and some of them even wear enormous rings and glittering mitres too. So you see the poetry with which you invest the priestly robes does not interfere in any way with the exercise of the official duties of one who does not believe, nor does it bestow an additional merit on the functions of those who do. Besides, you know well that as long as a priest does not renounce publicly the doctrines of his church, whether he believes in them or not, he remains a priest *de facto* as well as *de jure*. And, again, we have a number of old dogmas which are believed in or not at our option. The dogma of Transubstantiation is one of them. There are Anglican priests who believe in it, but there are others who do not, and the latter are as good priests as the former. The object of our discussion being my own conduct, I will speak only of myself. However, before I touch the point under discussion, let me call your attention to the following important fact.

“Any institution whatsoever, no matter what its origin, purpose, or final goal, can exist only on the ground of utility. We know by past experience that institutions which have outlived their usefulness have had to disappear forever, giving place to more effective ones. Unquestionably this is due to the inexorable law which establishes the inevitable survival of the fittest. We

have a great number of institutions all over the country, entirely of secular character. They have no claims whatever to divine origin, to infallibility, nor to absolutism. They are known to us as being human institutions for humanitarian purposes. To these belong the civil and criminal laws, with their respective courts and judges. As dependent accessories, there are city jails, state prisons, and the implacable galleys. We have a standing army of say one hundred thousand bayonets, and a formidable navy that can destroy and annihilate cities and battleships, should it be provoked by the hostility of any of the foreign powers. We have state militia, civic police, hospitals, asylums, sanatoriums, correction houses, and what not. For the support and maintenance of these institutions the people are spending millions upon millions every year. All of these institutions are recognized as important and greatly beneficial. Each and all of them have a particular mission to fulfil, which when combined together have only one object and aim in view, which is the good of the country and the people. Everyone knows that these institutions have been originated by men to meet the existing and constantly increasing exigencies of mankind, and as human as they are, they are good and useful, and this is why they exist. So is the institution of the Christian church. While I fail to see its divine origin and can recognize it only as a human institution, I cannot help seeing its usefulness as such, and this is why I stay in the church.

“It is on the ground of altruistic utility that I stand, my friend. The people at large know little of the contents of the Scriptures and still less of the soph-

istry of our theology. What they see in the church is the good it does. My old nurse, Bessy, bless her soul, would fight any man that dared to say a word against the Bible. This she does, not because she knows that book so well, but because the Bible with her is the synonym of her church and all that is good and commendable. So it is with the rest of the people. Our churches are made up and supported by men and women with the best of intentions, but whether they know it or not, their motives are purely selfish. Strictly speaking, all our deeds, whether in matters spiritual or temporal, are actuated by this very motive and accordingly our religious beliefs are necessarily constructed upon the bartering basis. Should we tell our people to be good for goodness' sake, I doubt whether we would have as many followers. They expect and we must promise something in exchange for their conduct. Thus we have at our disposal the eternal bliss and happiness of heaven and the interminable tortures of hell. They may choose whichever they please. Singularly enough, woman by her natural inclination is a religious person. In most cases, if not actuated by the intrinsic merit of religious principles, she is led to it by the simple fact that she is either a mother, a wife, or a sister to the man. She wants her man, whether husband, child, or brother, to be good, kind, and prosperous, and the only place where she can make him good, as far as she knows, is the church; for the church teaches sobriety, kindness, and a mass of other virtues. You know well that many men go to church simply to please their mothers or wives. But whether by doing so they actually become good is another question. However, whether the man is a believer or not,

one thing is certain, namely, that he wishes his wife to be religious, for he thinks and believes that the integrity and purity of her character entirely depend upon her religious principles. Thus the church is a source of great comfort to both the man and the woman, and this is why they stay in the church.

"No one asks me or you what we believe. What they want to know is what we teach, and they know too well that we teach only things that are good, and this we do by words and living example. Owing to the fact that we, you and I, are at the head of our respective parishes, we can do a great deal more good than many a layman with the best of intentions. The mission we have to fulfil at times is painful and disappointing, but it has this particular advantage, that where the efforts of others fail and remain ineffective, there our coöperation is the most welcome. To pacify the turbulent elements that destroy the peace and the relative happiness of a family, to comfort sufferers, to solace the ill-treated and persecuted, and above all to offer a friendly hand to the poor and destitute, is the joy of my life and the only gratifying motive of my existence. This is the magical magnet which keeps me where I am."

"Only commendable, indeed," remarked Mr. Howard, "but while you are enjoying the satisfaction which you derive from the good you are doing, as a priest, you certainly have to preach; and when you do so, according to the established usage you have to quote the Scriptures and teach your people the way the church teaches."

"This is exactly what I do," said the doctor.

"But then how can you teach your people the di-

vine revelations, when you do not believe that they are divine?" asked Mr. Howard.

"You forget that I am not teaching the people my views. I am teaching them those of the church, as she wishes me to do. I keep my opinions to myself. Besides, have you ever thought that the word *divine* you are using with such emphasis does not really mean anything?" inquired the doctor.

"Does not mean anything," repeated Mr. Howard slowly. "What do you mean, doctor?"

"What I mean is very simple," replied Dr. Stuart. "In order to know things divine, first we must know the Deity. The Deity, meaning God, the Absolute, alas, we know not. This happens for the simple reason, not that we do not wish to know, but that we cannot know."

"If that be the case, am I to conclude that you do not believe in God, doctor?" inquired the divine with evident stupefaction.

"Not in the Jewish God, most decidedly," answered the doctor thoughtfully, "nor do I know of anyone else who does. Full of jealousy and mercantile propensities (Judges 4:2), the Jewish God is decidedly indecent when on the insistence of Moses to see His face, He consents to show him only His back parts. (Exodus 33:23.) How inconveniently human! Oh, dear, dear, can you not perceive that such a God is only a counter-part of a primitive and crude man? Can I not make you understand what I mean? Either we have to change our definition of God or alter our conception of Him. If God is Absolute, no man can know Him. If He is knowable, then He is not Absolute. Can you not grasp the imposing truth conveyed by this?"

"Yes indeed, I grasp the idea," said Mr. Howard, "but, I cannot grasp the inanity which follows the idea. If we cannot know God, does it not follow that we should remain without one? Should we abide by this, do you not think we are falling into the abyss of godlessness which necessarily must lead us to destruction?"

"Why such extremity? The fact is that we do not know the Absolute, yet we are not swallowed by any of the destructive elements," answered Dr. Stuart calmly. "Can you not admit that there is a God, an Absolute, whom no human mind can comprehend? Do you not think it bold and inconsistent to assert that we can know the unknowable? Why do we insist in knowing God? Is it because we are the dispensators of His blessings, or because it is our business to know Him? Whether we wish or not, the fact remains that we do not, and cannot know the Absolute the way we claim to know Him. However, this fact that we do not know the Absolute, because we cannot know Him, does not necessarily indicate that there is no Absolute."

"Now you are contradicting yourself, my dear doctor," remarked Mr. Howard. "If the Absolute is unknowable, how can you know of its existence? By admitting that there is an Absolute, you make the Absolute knowable. Here let me use your own logic—either you have to change your definition of the Absolute or alter your conception of the same."

"Your logic would be perfectly correct, had I said that we can know the Absolute," responded Dr. Stuart. "To know the Absolute is vastly different from knowing of the Absolute. While knowing the Absolute

remains utterly inaccessible to us, knowing of the same becomes inevitable if we would proceed through the channels of those natural laws which are at our disposal as knowable things. The things we know are either solid, liquid, or gaseous. These three forms cover all things knowable and accessible to our senses. They have forms and occupy space. By this very process which makes these things knowable to us we know that they are in complete dependency one upon the other. In other words, no particle of the knowable can exist without the coöperation of the rest. I am stating my formula in a general way simply to avoid the somewhat tedious task of specific and technical classification of matters, which more than once has clearly demonstrated to the satisfaction of experimental science the existence of this stupendous law of mutual dependency of all knowables. No one who knows anything of natural science will dispute this. This order of things leads us to the following: if the existence of A is dependent upon B and that of B upon C, the last knowable, Z, must necessarily be promoted by something which is not of the category of the knowable. No matter how we proceed, we are ultimately bound to reach the unknown. The theory of self-existence of all matters without the outer cause, cannot stand investigation for the simple reason that the exhibited power of the so-called self-existence of each separate form of matter is nothing more than the exhibition of the law of dependency; hence it becomes evident that the origin and source of the power which thus causes the existence of all knowables is to be found outside of the material world. By this simple calculation we are forced to admit that behind the knowable and the visible there is the unknown and the invisible.

How much of that unknown and invisible still remains in the category of the accessible to us we do not know. The future will demonstrate this. But no matter what the size and proportion of that particular universe may be, it is reasonably certain, nay imperative, to conclude, that behind and above all, where the order of mutual dependency ceases by the law of limitation, there we are bound to find the Absolute. To know what that Absolute is, is beyond our comprehension. But as I already said, the fact that we do not know the Absolute does not indicate that there is no Absolute. On the contrary, following the existing order of the knowable, we are forced to admit the existence of the unknown and the unknowable realms of many and higher orders behind which is the ultimate Being, the Absolute. This Absolute is my God, yours and the rest of our generation. He is the supreme Cause of causes. It is that God that makes the flowers bloom and grow, that causes the rivers to flow, and covers the high peaks with snow. Being Absolute, He is the absolute Cause of the existence of all things, whether visible or invisible to us. This is the God we adore. I said I did not believe in the Jewish God. But I am reasonably sure that in our day you will not find many who believe the way the Jews of many thousand years ago and the primitive Christians believed. It is a very serious error to deny the fact that the conception of God in the minds of individuals, including theologians, as well as of the masses, changes as rapidly as they progress. Owing to this fact, you know well that today we cannot preach the way they used to in the Middle Ages, or even only a hundred years ago. Take, for instance, the famous sermons of Savonarola, which are still to be

found in some libraries, and have them delivered in the churches of today. As eminent as they were considered in the days of the past, they would be the greatest and the most complete failure ever seen in our day. Of the ferocity and implacability of the supreme Judge, who for the simple omission of an imposed duty sends His children to hell, we do not speak nowadays except with guarded moderation. The God of today is the God of clemency, magnanimity, and ineffable love, and this decidedly cannot be the bloodthirsty God of the Jews as conceived by them and represented in the Bible. The system of making people good by the sheer force of fear belongs to the past. It is true, there are still those who, undeveloped as they are, need to be spoken to in the language of the past, but even these are rapidly growing out of the stage of savagery. So it is this God, the Absolute—who makes the birds sing and infuses a new life into the whole of nature every spring; He who governs the universe, who directs the destinies of nations, who promotes individuals, who consoles the needy and destitute; He who fills the human heart with love and reverence for all that is lofty, noble and good—He is my God, in Him I firmly believe and Him alone I preach.”

“What you say, doctor, sounds very well indeed, and I agree with you that it represents a set of views which may strongly appeal to the people of today,” said Mr. Howard. “But what I want to know is this: if, as you say, your God is unknowable, how do you know His will in order to teach it to your people?”

“Oh, what a childish question,” exclaimed Dr. Stuart. “But I forgive you. Were I not a theologian like yourself, I would have classified you among the Hot-

tentots. As it is, we are pardonable, for we have been taught and are accustomed in our daily life to look for the will of God in the clumsy traditions of the Jews of old. Will of God, you say? Oh! dear, dear! Do you not know that a book as large as our entire globe would be too small to give us even an infinitesimal idea of the wonderful story of the universe in which the will of the Absolute is manifested? His will is as extensive as He is Absolute. However, for our immediate guidance, little as it is, we have the horizon that surrounds us, an open book to read and know the will of the Absolute. He has expressed it and defined it very accurately in the laws which govern this little world of ours. Obey these laws and you will obey the Absolute."

"And yet," remarked Mr. Howard timidly, "the fact remains that the Bible which you call the hodgepodge of the children of Israel still constitutes the source of the teachings you preach in your church. If you believe firmly in what you say, why do you not throw overboard the old Book and tell the people of the God you know in your own way? In other words, can you say publicly what you are telling me now in confidence?"

"To tell the people that the Bible is a medley of the infamous misdoings of the Jewish people, which I firmly believe to be the case, I am not ready as yet," resumed Dr. Stuart. "This happens, not because I have not the courage of my convictions to tell what I believe, but simply because the cause I am advocating would gain nothing by it. Only a fool can pride himself on the act of destruction. My object is to build. The structure upon which the Bible stands is many thousand years old. It is like a Banyan tree, whose branches have sent shoots to the ground and, thanks to the fer-

tility of the Aryan race, have taken root and become additional trunks. This tree covers a considerable area of ground and shelters almost one third of our globe. But this Banyan tree, the *Ficus Indica*, though it can live a period of five thousand years, is nothing more than a Banyan tree. It has its beginning and it must have its end.

"However, what we must consider is the present. You know well that the existing social structure of to-day, with its numerous and varied tributaries, was not made in one day, nor was it made by us. Centuries of dark ages have largely contributed to the moulding and the shaping of it. Owing to this fact, the honest believer of our days sees everything through the glasses of the past. In his understanding, the whole universe is run according to the calendar of our church. Should he wish to know what is going on in the wide world, all he has to do is to look on the pages of that booklet, which represents, as it were, the program of annual events. Beginning the first day of January and ending with the last day of December, everything is arranged in a way that meets his approval. In other words, our people are accustomed to a system of life which is based on the churchly orders. Centuries of tireless clerical efforts have trained them that way. Every detail in their lives is arranged accordingly, including their dress and even nourishment. For the majority of people life is made up of trivialities. What would our belles do without the Easter hat? What would we do without the Christmas collection? There is the humorous in St. Valentine's day that amuses, and the barbarous in Hallowe'en that distracts. What shall I say of the daily habits and weekly peregrinations of the masses?

"It is an easy matter to call your neighbor's attention to the fact that he has outgrown his old coat, that the sleeves are too short, and that in circumference he is larger than his garment can hold, that the old, faded, and ragged material can stand the vicissitudes and the ravages of tempestuous times no longer, and that, finally, instead of comfort, the old thing has become a burden and a source of much annoyance and discomfort in the changing habits of his daily life. It is easy to say all of these, but not so easy to make him dispense with the garment which covers his nudity, though old and ragged it be. While your reasoning may appeal to him, his immediate necessities would make him rebel, for he knows the moment he follows your advice to throw away the old thing, he will witness his nakedness and suffer much from the inclemency of the surrounding elements. He would be deprived of the warmth of his daily life and cast away to perish with no redress nor hope for the recovery of the lost comfort. Can you blame the attitude of such a man?

"It would be vastly different if I could offer him a new coat that would not only replace creditably the old one, but would insure such comfort and protection as would effectively meet the requirements of his own days and the days to come. But unfortunately this coat, the making of which has become the sole aim and object of my life, is not ready as yet, or, rather, it is not in shape to be presented to the public.

"We have had experiences in the past which taught us a lesson that is not forgotten. There are men of strong character, deep in intellectuality and phenomenal versatility, on both sides of the Atlantic, who, having made a profound study of the subject, have force-

fully demonstrated the untenability of the doctrines based on the old Jewish book. I shall not enumerate the names of these men, who in my opinion deserve great credit for their tireless studies and researches. They are too well known to be named. But after all, notwithstanding the best of intentions and unqualified efforts displayed by these men, what did they accomplish? Nothing that will bear confirmation. They were like meteors, appearing and disappearing one after another. Led by simple curiosity, the most devout Christians went by the thousands, crowding immense halls hired for the purpose, and listened to them. They ardently heard their lectures, nodded in approval, applauded feverishly, laughed deliriously, made unseemly jokes at the expense of the Biblical heroes, and—the following Sunday they went back to their respective churches, to hear the old story of Miss Ruth, a strolling country girl creeping slyly to bed to her cousin Boaz—one of those pretty stuffs which we call the word of God! If anything, these meteoric crusaders only provoked and irritated the wounded sensitiveness of the venerable army of our beloved colleagues, the sky pilots, who did not fail to display their just wrath in well calculated tirades, branding the lecturers with the epithets of atheists, agnostics, incarnated devils, and what not! Atheists! How foolish and nonsensical this appellation is one can see from the fact that the word ‘atheist’ designates one who disbelieves or denies the existence of a God, or supreme intelligent Being, but decidedly it does not mean the God of the conception of the primitive and crude man. No intellectual or thoughtful man of to-day, who is guided by correct reasoning, ever can say that there is no God, if only for the reason that in or-

der to make such an assertion he must first know as a fact the non-existence of God, and this decidedly no living man knows. The most that a man of that description can reasonably say is that he does not know whether there is a God or not. The one who assumes such an attitude is called an 'agnostic,' a word suggested by Huxley in 1869, which now has become popular with those who think they can humiliate by this appellation those who think differently from what they do. Statements like this must be taken at their face value. That an agnostic does not know of the existence of the supreme Cause of causes indicates only his limitation; however, if he is willing to confess to his shortcomings, why should this be considered any more humiliating than the statement of others who frankly say that they do not know mathematics? There are men who know nothing of geology, biology, and other branches of science. Are they guilty of misconduct? On the other hand, the men who expressly deny the existence of the supreme Being as the one who through the established laws of nature forbids wrong doings (and this they do in order to justify the gratification of their corrupt appetites) are those belonging to that class of people who, by the force of the workings of cause and effect, are destined sooner or later to receive their merited rewards either in state prison or on the gallows.

"I was in Philadelphia at the time that one of these celebrated men delivered his famous lecture in the Academy of Music of that city with tremendous success. The hall was packed to its utmost capacity as never before, and the impression produced by the eloquent orator was simply bewildering. The enthusiasm of the audience was worked to the highest pitch. When the

enormous crowd left the building and dispersed in all directions, they carried with them that peculiar air of intoxication which, saturated, as it were, with thrilling sarcasms full of humorous pathos and a mass of arguments construed in a way that displayed the picturesque and the comical in the interpretations presented by the speaker, was enormously contagious. The result was that for several days, nay weeks and months, following, the only topic that inflamed the imagination of the masses was the New York man's lecture. The next thing I learned was that several parishes of that city and vicinity hurriedly installed in their churches expensive organs and hired well organized choirs in order to attract their people. A foolish and entirely unnecessary precaution. The people went back to their churches, it is true, but they would have gone anyway. And why so? The answer is to be found in my illustration of the old coat. This man, the lecturer, told his audience very interesting and instructive things indeed, but, as honest as his intentions were, he did not accomplish anything good and durable. He aimed to ridicule and possibly to destroy the set of religious views of his hearers, but he promised nothing, gave nothing in its place. It is easier to destroy than to build. Take away the religious beliefs of a man of ordinary calibre, and you will make of him a ferocious beast. For this reason I say, do not destroy the old, no matter how idiotic it appears to be, unless you are able to give something better in its stead. So long as I have nothing to offer, I shall keep silence. This is why I cannot tell the people today what I think of the Bible. This being the case, common sense dictates that I should leave the old alone until such time—"

"And in the meanwhile?" interrupted Mr. Howard inquiringly.

"In the meanwhile I resolved to remain the standard bearer of the old orthodoxy," replied Dr. Stuart. "In these turbulent days of ours disbelief in the teachings of the past is growing with a surprising rapidity. Look at the amazing number of people we are losing every day. They are becoming more and more exacting. They are no longer satisfied with promises of heaven. They want their rewards right here and now. A lady whom I hesitate to call a reformer, for she did not reform anything, and whom I may rather designate as an inventor, promises her followers this, and the masses leave our churches to join the new sect. There, they say, at least they are getting something in return for their money, for they no longer have to pay the heavy and numerous bills of the medical fraternity, and in addition to this they are assured of all the promises of heaven too. The imposing meeting houses—no one knows why they call them churches—they are building all over the country are attracting the best element there is in our communities. As new as the sect is, its phenomenal growth in the last few years unquestionably indicates that there is something real in the tenet of the sect which not only attracts the masses, but holds them fast, transforming the new adherents into an army of zealous workers in the new field. Owing to this fact, in order to neutralize this influence (which is detrimental to our interests) some of our leading clergy have inaugurated what they term the Emmanuel movement. The signs of the times, to be sure. By and by, if we wish to keep our people in our churches, we all will have to practice the art of healing.

But will this stop the transmigration from one camp into another?

"On the other hand, we have a category of dilettanti who make it their business to reconcile modern science with the old religion. Is this to show that our religion is scientific? Oh, what an absurdity! You can no more reconcile the set of views of the primitive and crude man from which our religion derives its origin with the set of views acquired by the experiences of the modern man which commonly is called science—than you can stop the rotation of the moon. The two sets of views are as diametrically opposed as the two poles of our globe are. Either one or the other must reign. The two cannot go together.

"In such a chaos of opinions and doctrines, the man of today is exposed to dangerous trials. But these trials, as oppressing as they seem to be, are exceedingly beneficial inasmuch as they constitute a stepping stone to the promotion and growth of mankind to the incoming new fields. However, while this is applicable to advanced individuals, it hopelessly hampers the average man in his peregrinations. This man in most cases is a slave to the traditions of the past. And why so? Simply because he has not grown to the stage of self-governing power as yet. He must be led. He must be told what to do and what to avoid. He needs a leader, a dictator. As big and as independent as he appears to be in matters pertaining to his material welfare, he is as small and as timid as a frightened church mouse when he faces problems other than those marked with the mercantile stamp. The leaders of all sorts of religious movements knew well this weak point in the hearts of men, and prudently utilized it to the ad-

vantage of their undertakings. Hence the origin of dogmas, hence a set of absolute and undeniable truths. Oh, what a mockery! Be it what it may, the fact remains that these and numerous other similar reflections led me to the steps I have taken—"

"Namely?" suggested Mr. Howard.

"Not to deprive any man of his contentment unless I can make him happier than he is," answered Dr. Stuart. "The people now under my spiritual guidance are content with what they are. They are Episcopalians because they were born of parents professing that faith. It would be only logical to add that were they born of the followers of Mahomet, they would be just as good Mahometans.

"In accepting my position here, I had one particular object in view. A few years ago the old church, a wooden structure, was destroyed by fire. As a result of this regrettable occurrence there was a great deal of work to be accomplished in building a new church and reorganizing the parish on a firmer basis. Such a position appealed to me strongly, for I wished to be kept busy, as busy as a bee whose every second is engaged in daily labors. From the moment I landed in New York City on my return from Europe, my sole desire was to take charge of a parish where an unusual amount of work was expected from its rector, and such a parish I found here where I am now. By assuming my present duties I materialized my dream. The daily labors, mostly of mechanical nature, keep me busy, very busy indeed, and this pleases me, inasmuch as it leaves me practically no time to think of anything else, especially of the problems I have been discussing with you.

"I have opened my heart to you simply because you are the only one of my friends with whom I can speak freely, and this is why I did not hesitate to tell you of the experiences I have had and the conclusions that naturally followed them. However, being firmly convinced that all sorts of religious innovations, of which we have an innumerable quantity in these days, do not promise anything but new disappointments, I have decided to resist all and every movement that might lead to their consideration, and have inaugurated a policy that is most satisfactory to me for the time being. This policy is the old orthodoxy. Yes, an orthodoxy that despises all and every idea that carries the mark of modern times, an orthodoxy that requires an absolute suppression of reasoning and unconditional submission to the yoke of yore,—yes, to the yoke of dark ages, if you please, when the wise men of the day spent their time in solving the problems of heavenly affairs, learnedly inquiring whether the angels had sexes or not, and the poets wrote long and erudite poems in truly exquisite language, describing the manner in which those condemned to eternal tortures were punished. These men of the past found and formulated for us a set of absolute and undeniable truths which constitutes the basis and the whole structure of our orthodoxy, and those we shall follow. Why should we think for ourselves? Nay, why should we think at all? Are not we told that we are a genus of poor and wretched dwarfs and pygmies when compared with the men who made orthodoxy? Of course we are. I should say we are even less than that, for the dwarfs and pygmies, as deformed as they are, might have ideas of their own, but we can have no such privileges

as that. We are dummies and puppets, or better still, we are nothing more than a species of African gray parrots. Has not the latter the qualities required to make a good orthodox? Yes, indeed, the less original you are, the stronger the certitude of your being a copy. Besides, of what use would it be to talk Greek to Romans? Should I try to expound my views, would my hearers understand me? I have grave reasons to doubt. The old proverb well says: '*Cave quid dicis, quando et cui.*' Yes, indeed, to be cautious as to what you say, when and to whom, is a mighty effective policy to all who wish to attain the desired goal. In the meanwhile, oh! dear, dear! let us be orthodox, if only for the reason that '*salus populi suprema est lex.*' (The welfare of the people is the supreme law.)"

Mr. Howard was deeply absorbed in his thoughts when the doctor's last words echoed through the library. He did not speak. Evidently he had nothing more to say.

The grave and prolonged silence which followed would have kept these two well meaning men in ignorance of the world and its affairs, had it not been for the appearance of Miss Cecily, who entering the library, in a gentle voice announced that dinner was served.

"Come, Howard," said the doctor, rising and turning to his friend. "Come, let us partake of what the Lord hath given."

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A couple of weeks later the palatial train called the Overland Express, carried Mr. Howard toward the shores of the blue Atlantic to his parish, where he resumed his duties as rector with invigorated energy.

CHAPTER V

THE NESTORIAN MONK *

In the well appointed library of his residence on Adams Street, Count Morat was examining a curious map spread before him on a large table near the west window. This map represented a hypothetical sketch of the monophyletic origin and the diffusion of the twelve species of the human race from Lemuria over the earth, and embodied one of the many attempts of modern ethnologists to trace the origin of races and locate the probable portion of the earth whence they came. In order to show this, the author, for reasons known to him, had placed his starting point on the hypothetical continent now sunk under the level of the Indian Ocean to which Sclater has given the name of Lemuria, and branched his lines in all directions, marking them with the names of twelve now distinct human races. The map showed that the land in question was located in the basin of the Indian Ocean, its northern extremity being identical with that of the Island of Ceylon, expanding east to the eastern coast of the Island of Borneo, including the Philippines; west to the now eastern extremity of the African continent, and south in a parallel line with the southern end of the Island of Madagascar; thus practically occupying the whole of the basin of the Indian Ocean. While the

* In this and the following chapter the author introduces a coterie of thinkers already known to the readers of his book entitled "The Searchers."

theory of the author of the sketch as to the monophyletic origin—that is to say, that the human race evolved from a single parent form—appeared to the Count quite plausible, he could not refuse his attention to the claims of polygenists, who adhere to the theory of plurality of origin. However, considering that both presentations were only hypothetical, there was no serious ground for critical investigation of either of them. Ethnology, or the science which treats of the division of mankind into races, of their origin, distribution, and relations, and the peculiarities which characterize them, being in its infancy, could not be depended upon. The ancient writers of our western world contribute very little to it. Among the Greeks, Herodotus and Xenophon give a faint idea of the ancient populations. Among the Latins, Sallust, Cæsar, and especially Tacitus, supply fuller information. Yet it is only in comparatively modern times,—since the discovery of America, the circumnavigation of the globe, the exploration of Asia, Africa, and the Pacific Islands, and the revival of physical and physiological studies,—that ethnology can be said to have begun to accumulate the materials necessary for the natural classification of the human races. Owing to this fact, the question of the unity or plurality of origin of races can be answered only hypothetically. Many believe in the blood relationship of all human beings, while others are of the opinion that each race originated independently. Not all who accept the doctrine of evolution are monogenists. There are polygenists who believe in the plurality of origin of the human races, and they base their belief on the fact that the languages spoken by the different races do not seem to have

come from one and the same source. This information we gather from the ethnologists of a few years ago. Such being the construction of the ethnology of today, it utterly fails to solve the problem of the origin of man. Is it any wonder that there are in circulation as many fantastic legends as there were isolated nations in the past, which tell us the story of how the first man came into existence? We are told that the majority of ethnologists have adopted the monophyletic hypothesis and regard the southern part of Asia as the birthplace of man, placing it either in the high lands of the Himalayas, or near the sources of the Oxus and Jaxartes, or between the Euphrates and Tigris, or in the southern part of Arabia, or in the ancient continent of Lemuria. The author does not mention the possibilities of Atlantis—a land which occupied a much larger basin of the ocean by that name,—yet, the sources from which he draws his knowledge of Lemuria are the same which postulate the existence of Atlantis also. In fact, Atlantis was of a much later period and better known than Lemuria, the existence of which Mr. P. L. Sclater affirms, basing his assertion on zoölogical researches made by him. (1850-1860.) But for reasons known to him, the author ignores Plato's famous island Atlantis, or "Poseidon," which, being only a fragment of the big continent, ultimately disappeared in the abyss of the ocean some eleven thousand years ago. But, of course, according to the views of our scholars, anything that is not measurable by the limited knowledge at their disposal must necessarily be considered hypothetical; and this is only correct. Yet we wish they would tell us which branch of the scientific creed is not hypothetical? Our scien-

tific luminaries are exceedingly proud of their attainments, as hypothetical as they are. It was in the second half of the last century that they were taken by surprise by the discovery of the existence of an Indo-European family of speech, a work admirably accomplished by the erudite German, Frederick Schlegel. It was during that period, also, that our scientists were shaken to the core by the development of Lamarck's ideas, which were thoroughly established by the efforts of the gifted zoölogist, Thomas Huxley, in his three lectures on "Man's Place in Nature." (1863.) Eight years afterwards Darwin, having entirely reconciled himself to the views of his friend Huxley, gave to the world the two-volume work, "The Descent of Man and his Sexual Selection," with additional proofs in support of the views advocated. (1871.) During the many turbulent years that followed, our scientists fought valiantly against the invasion of the new ideas, which were called unscientific innovations, concocted and seasoned in the dream of an after-dinner nap. What a pity they do not say whose particular cranium they thought it was that became the receptacle for such an unseemly joke! Yes, indeed, it was a dream, but a dangerous one to the worn-out system of the old machinery, the introduction of which unmistakably promised the ruin of the then existing scientific creed. These ideas were new, but they were new only to our western world. They were not cut out in the shops of our Latin cooks, most assuredly. And yet today we pity those scientists who do not know that these so-called discoveries were anything but new discoveries. That the Sanskrit is the mother of all languages he only can deny whose information on the subject is gathered from

the annual almanacs. That the law of evolution as outlined by Lamarck, presented by Huxley, Darwin, and Wallace, and advocated with extraordinary vigor by the still living German scientist, Ernst Haeckel, was known to the sages of India many thousand years before we ever heard of it, is also a fact well known to those whose scientific researches are not limited to the narrow scope of European culture. But how little is the importance of the step made in natural sciences by the introduction in our midst of the law of evolution can be perceived only by those who are familiar with the system of teachings of the old sages of the Asiatic continent. By the introduction of what is now called the Darwinian theory, our scholars are familiarizing themselves with only one part, the crudest, grossest part of that immense machinery which makes our insignificant little world what it is. To tell our scientists of today that the law of *evolution* cannot exist without the law of *involution*, would be as incomprehensible as the former was when first introduced in Europe fifty years ago. And yet the knowledge of this is as fully indispensable as the Copernican theory of our solar system. There is nothing that can evolve before it is involved. *Ex nihilo, nihil fit*. Nothing comes out of nothing. The evolved must have a ground from which to evolve and pursue its inevitable course. The butterfly evolves from a caterpillar; this we know, because this particular process is accessible to our senses. But unfortunately we do not always see the caterpillar from which other things are evolved, and because we do not see it, according to our exalted wisdom it does not exist. Nevertheless the fact remains that evolution cannot exist without the law of *in-*

volution. Of the latter our western world knows absolutely nothing. But the old sages of the far East knew this many thousand years ago, as well as that portion of the stupendous law, known under the name of evolution, which has entered the western arena of learning to stay and prepare the younger generation of Aryans for the understanding of the greater laws of Nature. However, to learn this our scientists will wait for another Lamarck, another Huxley, and another Darwin. In the meantime, and by the time they appear, many rivers will have changed their beds and many leopards their spots—to the supreme disgust and disappointment of old Jeremiah. There is nothing so valuable and sweet as the lesson acquired from our own experiences.

These were the thoughts that engaged Count Morat as he examined his curious map. He would have followed them indefinitely, but Mr. Milton, who at the time was sitting behind the desk, began to speak.

"It is surprising what a mass of complications arise from an opinion based on mere supposition," said he, laying on the desk the document he had just finished reading. "It reminds me of a subject I wish to discuss with you, Count. Have you ever read the lectures of Thomas Carlyle on 'Heroes and Hero-worship'?"

"Yes, indeed, I read them very carefully," answered the Count, taking his seat on a sofa opposite the window. "Why, what is it you want to know?"

"You remember you were telling me about an old book you recently received with other things from the Orient, containing the story of the Nestorian monk who played such an important rôle in the makeup of Mahomet?"

"Perfectly. But should we choose to believe the Chaldean, Carlyle is entirely wrong as to the identity of the man whom he calls Sergius. By the way," added the Count, somewhat refreshing his memory, "the book in question is written without punctuation, and as you know, the Chaldean language without it is a mass of groups of dead letters without the vowels. It takes a well versed scholar to read such a book intelligibly. So I gave it to Yonan who, knowing as he does his language better than I do, can decipher it much more easily and tell me the contents of it. Now that you are interested in it, press the button under the desk and we will see what we can learn on the subject."

In response to the electric bell, Yonan, the ever faithful servant of the Count, entered the room.

"Yonan, did you read the book I gave you to examine?" inquired Count Morat.

"Yes, master, I just finished it. It is a well written book," answered Yonan.

"Now, then," resumed Count Morat, "tell us the name of that monk; somehow I cannot recollect it just now,—was it not Rabban Behra?"

"No, master, Rabban Behra was a wise and saintly man. The one in question is Rabban Bhera. The first conveys the meaning of light, as you know, and the last does not mean anything at all," said Yonan, standing erect, his right hand pressed on his chest.

"Just one second," interrupted Mr. Milton. "Before we go any farther, I would like to know who the author of the book is."

"The book bears the name of Rabban Audysho," answered Yonan.

"But what is this 'Rabban' you are repeating so often. If it is a name, it must be a queer coincidence that they all should be known under that one name," remarked Mr. Milton.

"No, no. Rabban in Chaldean means 'monk,' a monk. Do you hear me, Yonan?" said the Count, turning to his servant, evidently intending to impress him with the word last pronounced. "The story is of a monk, and is written by another monk, and that is where the Rabban comes in."

Then he looked at Yonan and began to laugh.

"I must explain the cause of my merriment," said the Count to Mr. Milton. "It is a singular case with Yonan that whenever he wants to speak of a monk in English he always uses the noun *monkey*. Owing to this he kept me guessing the other day for half an hour while telling me about an incident with monkeys living in cells. He kept repeating that monkeys were at the table and again at prayer, which of course was a puzzle to me, not being able to imagine the devotion and piety of monkeys. Not until he told me in Chaldean could I understand that he meant 'monks.' He has another word which plays upon him this very trick of *quid-pro-quo*. His 'gospel' is 'gossip' and 'gossip' a 'gospel.'"

"Well," said Yonan, timidly, "as defective as my English is, I like to use it. But really, master, it is not my fault that the monk and monkeys sound alike to me. The same thing occurs with the word gospel. I cannot think of it without thinking of gossip. The fault or the merit, as the case may be, must be with the English, who failed to find a better word for the gospel and the monk."

"Do not blame the English," said Mr. Milton, laughing; "it is the similarity of sound that plays the trick. However, let us have the story."

"One moment," interrupted Count Morat. "First let us see what Carlyle says upon the subject."

Saying this, he took a prettily bound book from the book-case near by and began to read.

"Mahomet, as he grew up, accompanied his uncle on trading journeys and such like; in his eighteenth year one finds him a fighter, following his uncle in war. But perhaps the most significant of all his journeys is one we find noted as of some years earlier date; a journey to the Fairs of Syria. The young man here first came in contact with a quite foreign world,—with one foreign element of endless moment to him; the Christian religion. I know not what to make of that "Sergius the Nestorian monk," whom Abu-Thaleb and he are said to have lodged with; or how much any monk could have taught one still so young."

"I am not surprised," exclaimed the Count. "How could he, with such meager information as he had of the man and his subtle intrigues? However, let us follow him."

"Pardon me for interrupting you again," said Mr. Milton. "I have often observed the word *Abu* in stories relating to Arab life, but never knew the exact meaning of it. Now that I have this opportunity, will you kindly explain it to me?"

"Abu, in Arabic, means father," answered Count Morat, quite amused at the rôle of teacher of Oriental languages that he was assuming. "However, in order to make clear the use of it in this case, I must tell you that among Arabs of today, as in the past, it is custom-

ary for a married man, when he becomes a father, to drop his given name and be known as the father of his first son. For instance: a Hassan marries and begets a son who is named Ahmet. The moment this occurs there is no more Hassan; he is Abu-Ahmet, and his wife is Um-Ahmet, which means the mother of Ahmet. This custom, however, is restricted to the male children only, for the women of Mahomet take the very place in social life which was assigned to them by the Jewish traditions and which is equivalent to slavery. We have something analogous in other countries. Scandinavians and their kindred are sons of their fathers,—they are Jansens and Furgesons. Latins in the south and Slavs in the north are children of the soil,—hence the *de* preceding the name of the former, and the *ski* following that of the latter; both mean *of*, and are referring to a certain locality. Thus sometimes it is a difficult task to find out the given name of an Arab *paterfamilias*. Accordingly we do not try to know that of Mahomet's uncle, with whom the young prophet traveled far and wide. Suffice that he is known, as Carlyle says, by the name of Abu-Thaleb (which means that Thaleb was the name of his first son) and that he was an uncle to Mahomet."

"A queer custom," remarked Mr. Milton, "but I suppose as natural to the Arabs as is ours to us. We call our men Birds, Fridays, and Greenleafs."

"Precisely," said Count Morat, and resumed the reading. "Probably enough, it is greatly exaggerated, this of the Nestorian monk. Mahomet was only fourteen; had no language but his own; much in Syria must have been a strange, unintelligible whirlpool to him. But the eyes of the lad were open; glimpses of

many things would doubtless be taken in and lie very enigmatic as yet, which were to ripen in a strange way into views, into beliefs and insights one day. These journeys to Syria were probably the beginning of much to Mahomet.'

"Yes, indeed, they were much to Mahomet," remarked Count Morat, as he stopped reading and laid the book on the table, "for it was during these journeys that the young Arab became acquainted with—but now let Yonan relate the story as given by the biographer of the monk in question."

"The story narrated by Rabban Audysho is very graphic," said Yonan. "However, before I come to it, in answer to what Carlyle said I must state that it was not on the occasion of his first trip to Syria that Mahomet met and became acquainted with Rabban Bhera."

"Then it was not Sergius the Nestorian monk that he met," remarked Mr. Milton.

"The name of Sergius in connection with Mahomet's trips to Syria is entirely new to me," answered Yonan. "So far as I know, no Oriental historian or biographer ever speaks of that name. Long before I read the book the contents of which I am to relate, in fact while I was yet in my native country, I knew that it was Rabban Bhera, and no one else, who instructed the young Arab and inspired him with the idea of the messiahship of the Arabian horde. However, let us follow the biographer. The narrative starts by extolling the many and distinguished qualities of Rabban Bhera, stating that he was a man of great erudition and extensive learning, that he had traveled much and knew well many languages, including the Greek and the Arabic. When the first meeting occurred, Mahomet was nine-

teen years old. Here the author describes with admirable minutiae the meeting which eventually became the corner-stone of the greatness of the coming prophet. Rabban Bhera took a great fancy to the lad and became much attached to him, but this had nothing to do as yet with the question of the messiahship of the Arab. They simply became good friends. The description which follows deals particularly with the psychological part of this unusual friendship and clearly demonstrates that—

“You are going too much into details,” interrupted Count Morat; “there is no necessity for that, Yonan. Give us only a short sketch of the story, simply to see how much of it coincides with prevalent opinion on the subject and especially with what Carlyle says.”

“In that case, the story is short,” resumed Yonan. “After having known Rabban Bhera for some time, and several years after the first meeting, Mahomet, while on one of his many trips to Syria, persuaded his friend the monk to go with him to his native land. Disguised as an Arab, Rabban Bhera, who was a Chaldean by birth and a staunch Nestorian by creed, acceded to the wishes of his young pupil and went with him. When they reached their destination, and in conformity with the agreement made beforehand, Mahomet found a secluded spot in the near-by mountains, where the Chaldean instructor established himself. It was there, during the many years that followed, that Rabban Bhera taught and inspired his pupil with the mission he had to carry on. As to how the idea was originated, the monk describes it in his letters to his bosom friend and fellow monk, whose name was Rabban Ataniel, and with whom he carried on correspondence until

he fell prey to his own design. According to the letters in question, which are quoted in this book, Rabban Bhera, after having discussed the tenets of the new religion with Mahomet during the many years of the latter's study and contemplation, wrote the Koran with his own hand. The sum total of that book unquestionably indicates that its writer was a man of a mature mind and knew the then existing religions as well as the possibilities of the new one intended to be introduced, a knowledge of which Mahomet, the wild Arab, never could be suspected, especially when we consider that he knew not the art of reading nor that of writing."

"Carlyle corroborates this," said Count Morat, taking the book from the table. "This is what he says: 'One other circumstance we must not forget; that he, Mahomet, had no school learning; of the thing we call school learning none at all. The art of writing was but just introduced into Arabia; *it seems to be the true opinion that Mahomet never could write!* Life in the desert, with its experiences, was all his education.' However, while Carlyle recognizes this, he makes much of the sincerity of Mahomet, whom he seems to admire greatly."

"It would be only just to assert with Carlyle that Mahomet was sincere were it not for the final act of the drama, which ended the life of the subtle monk and unveiled the ambition of the Arab," resumed Yonan. "Here is how the narrative ends: When the final decision as to the presentation of the newly written Koran was reached, the question arose as to how this should be made in order to preserve the miraculous origin they wished to ascribe to it? After long and mature deliber-

ation, Rabban Bhera and his pupil came to the conclusion that the book should appear from the bottom of a well. The next question was where to find such a well and how to make the book leap up from it. Considering the incredulity of the heathen Arabs, and especially the unfriendly attitude of a strong array of enemies of the new prophet, the matter justly appeared to be of a very serious nature. But there was nothing impossible to the ambitious monk and his pupil. Mahomet soon found a deep, dry well in a wilderness located several miles from the inhabited portion of the land, and that well he made his choice. Having exhausted all imaginable ways for the practical execution of the plan, by the sheer force of circumstances Mahomet resorted to a scheme that appeared to him most ingenious. He ran to his teacher and laid before him his plan. To take a third person into their confidence would be a very dangerous undertaking; and considering the great sacrifices his wise and kind preceptor had made for the prophet he loved so much, would not he, Rabban Bhera, undertake the mission? He would have to descend the well on the designated night, taking with him the written Koran; when Mahomet with the flock of his devotees appeared next day for the opening of the well, he (Mahomet) would hold in his right hand a book of exactly the same dimensions and appearance as those of the written Koran, and showing it to those present, would say that by the design and express wishes of Allah, he would tie this book to the end of a rope and let it down to the bottom of the well, and when the book reappeared, it would contain the *reading*—the meaning of the word ‘Koran’—which would be the sum total of the laws and regula-

tions taught by him to his followers. Thus the great mission would be accomplished. As wise and subtle as the Chaldean monk was, he was trapped in his own net. Rabban Bhera, suspecting nothing, willingly consented to the scheme, and on the designated night, with the help of a strong rope and Mahomet's robust arms, descended to the bottom of the well, which was unusually deep. The next day was the day of great triumph, the memory of which for many centuries after became an undisputed power in Asia and Europe. Mahomet, having assumed that peculiarly exalted expression which was always found on his countenance on the desired occasions, announced the great miracle which would take place during the day or, to be exact, at the moment when the sun ceases to throw shadows—and taking with him his faithful followers, proceeded to the wilderness. Guided by invisible powers known only to him, as he declared, they reached the desired goal, where they found the long abandoned well. Here Mahomet raised his hand and demanded silence. After an inspired, devout, and religiously elevating address, he showed those present the book he held in his hand, which was not written upon, its pages being blank white parchment. Having tied the book to the end of the rope he had ordered to be brought to the place, he lowered it into the well until it struck the bottom. When this was done, Mahomet raised both hands to heaven and rapturously exclaimed, '*Allah hoo Akbar* (God is great). The one God is great and nothing else is so great! Faithfuls must now pray fervently, for God shall this moment dictate his holy will to us in the book we shall receive from within this well. *Allah hoo Akbar! Allah hoo Akbar!*' Then with unusual solemnity and pious unction

he started to pull up the rope, one end of which was resting on the bottom of the well, and when the book, evidently the same one which Mahomet showed to those present before he dropped it into the well, appeared, O wonder of wonders! The unwritten book was now all written, every page of it traced by the hand that was truly divine. Oh, what joy! What beatitude! The Lord, Allah, had come down from above and had expressed his holy will to the chosen ones under the guidance of his only prophet! Of course no one knew of the deception—that Rabban Bhera was at the bottom of the well for the purpose of removing the unwritten book from the end of the rope and replacing it with the written one he had carried with him. Now Mahomet, full of ecstasy and boundless felicity, was a divine source of inspiration to his followers, but not so to his own guilty conscience. He seemed to be transported to the clouds of heaven, but actually his mind was engaged with the solution of a problem upon which depended his success. Knowing human nature and its inconstancy, he concluded that his mission would be much safer without an accomplice. Accordingly he made another much inspired speech, in which he spoke of the sanctity of the place where the will of God was revealed, and in order to commemorate the exceptional and miraculous event of the day, he ordered that each faithful present should throw as many stones into the well as the devotional spirit might prompt. In a short time hundreds of stones whirled into the well with such unusual rapidity and exactness that in no time half of the well was filled with stones. Thus endeth the wise and subtle Rabban Bhera. Next, Mahomet destroyed everything in the cave where his instructor had spent

years writing the Koran for him. The custom of making stone mounds along the public highways is practiced until this day in all portions of the world where the followers of Mahomet dwell, and this is done in commemoration of that memorable day in the Arabian desert."

"The story runs very smoothly, and undoubtedly it is exceedingly romantic," said Mr. Milton thoughtfully, "but I am curious to know how your author came into the possession of this information relative to the events narrated."

"By virtue of a trick that the monk played upon the credulity of his pupil," answered Yonan. "While the ingenious prophet was very cautious in many things, he was entirely unsophisticated in other things, for he never discovered the machinations of his preceptor. This is what Rabban Audysho, the author, tells us. It was understood between the two that no living man should ever be acquainted with the fact that the Nestorian monk was living in that portion of the country. Accordingly he lived in strictest solitude in his cave, being provided with the necessities of life by the prophet personally. But after some years of secluded life, Rabban Bhera became aware of the danger and uncertainty of his position, and especially owing to the fact that he could no longer carry on his correspondence with his friend Rabban Atniel in Syria for fear that he would be discovered, in his last letter he succeeded in persuading the latter to send him for his protection and safety one of the brothers he knew in the monastery. Supplied with necessary directions and following the footsteps of Rabban Bhera, the lay brother, whose name was Mrado, joined a caravan of Arabs returning from Syria to their native land, and

safely reached his destination. It was a part of the scheme that Mahomet should not know of the presence of the new arrival, who, for obvious reasons, eventually became one of the number of his followers, skillfully guarding his identity and his relations with the man in the cave. Thus it happened that this very man, Mrado, became the living witness of all that occurred at the time, and thus, in the capacity of a follower of Mahomet, he was present when the miracle of the apparition of the Koran took place and signaled the end of the life of him for whose comfort and safety Mrado found himself in a strange country and among a strange people. After the occurrence of the events narrated, having now in view the safety of his own life, the lay brother, Mrado, did not dare nor did he care to say a word of what he knew, and at a given opportunity disappeared from the horizon like a piece of crystallized camphor, leaving no trace of his whereabouts. Having lived in Arabia for a number of years, he had no difficulty in joining a caravan going to Syria, and thus he reached his monastery and related all he knew to those interested, from whose statement the author wrote his narrative. This is in substance the history of Rabban Bhera the Nestorian monk, who wrote the Koran for Mahomet the Arabian prophet."

"The story would be incomplete without knowing where and how I discovered the existence of the book in question and how I finally became its possessor," said Count Morat, addressing Mr. Milton. "It was during that memorable journey of mine in the heart of Asiatic Turkey, of which you know well, when I visited the Hakaryan mountains, the seat of the only Nestorian

people * now in existence, that I paid my respects to the patriarch of that nation at his residence in the little village called Kotchanus. The Nestorian patriarch, known under the name of Mar-Shemon, whom I visited, was a young man of dignified appearance, but of no education or learning whatever. He spent his time receiving visitors and smoking tobacco, an occupation characteristic of most all Oriental potentates. I classify him among potentates, for although only a patriarch and supreme spiritual authority to all Nestorians, he exercised over his people an extraordinary power that was rather that of a reigning prince. He had a miniature court and well trained courtiers that were his own. In short he was, and I suppose still remains, the little pope of the Nestorians, wielding double power, the spiritual and the temporal, over a people numbering about twenty-five thousand souls, more or less. It was while enjoying the magnanimous hospitality of this patriarch that I met and became acquainted with a Nestorian celebrity, an ascetic, in fact the only one at that time, whose name was Shamasha Yonan. This gentleman, young and active, well known all over the country, whose fame had spread from the banks of the Tigris to the shores of Lake Van, was considered the most learned man in the realm of Nestordom. He lived the life of an anchorite and descended from the lofty mountains, where his abode was located in a cave, only on exceptional occasions when he was to attend some unusual gathering of the representatives of his nation, or to

* Nestorians, a sect of early Christians, so-called after Nestorius, patriarch of Constantinople (428-431). He was excommunicated and banished for asserting that the Virgin Mary could not be called *Mother of God* for she was only *Mother of Christ*.

pay his annual homage to the head of his church, the Patriarch Mar-Shemon. Fortunately for me, I knew enough Chaldean to carry on a lengthy conversation in that language. Being favored with this unusual incident, I cultivated the newly made acquaintance to the best of my ability, and during the quiet chats that I had with the ascetic I learned that he was well versed in the literature of his nation and knew to perfection the old tongue of his ancestry. As for his creed, I found him more of a Nestorian than Nestorius himself ever was. The information that I gathered from him in regard to the existing Nestorian hierarchy and the origin of it was undoubtedly most valuable, for it was as interesting as it was original. It was then that I learned about Rabban Bhera and the part he took in the life of Mahomet, occasioned by a curious and entirely unexpected incident which led my informant to the disclosure of this interesting episode of the past. It happened in this way. Two representatives of a distant Nestorian village located in the northern part of the country in the midst of the Kurdish tribes, were sent to the patriarch to complain of the ferocious oppression of Mahometans, stating that the cruelty and barbarity committed by them upon the little village were assuming such frightful dimensions that if the patriarch did not extend his powerful hand and protect them, the village would be wiped out of existence by the brutality of the oppressors. Upon hearing this sad news, the patriarch and his advisers hurriedly held council and immediately dispatched a qualified emissary to Reshid Pasha, then stationed in Van, asking his immediate co-operation, and relief for the sufferers. When this was done, my learned hermit, who took an active part in the

deliberations of the hastily summoned meeting, came to me and told me of the occurrence. Expressing his deep sorrow for his people, who for centuries have been sufferers at the hands of infidels, he added, with a resignation that was vividly imprinted upon his countenance, that they have to suffer now for the mistakes of their ancestors. 'Yes,' said he, 'the children must suffer for the sins of their fathers.' When I asked him to be more explicit, he said, 'Why, do you not know that were it not for Rabban Bhera, a monk of ours, there would be no Mahometans?' And then he told me the rest of the story as you heard it from Yonan. To corroborate this, he showed me the parchment book belonging to the Patriarch, containing the story, he having access to the small number of books that were found there. Gradually, as I listened to the learned recluse, my curiosity increased, for the narrative disclosed a fact entirely unknown to the European historians. No wonder, secluded as the Nestorians are in the high mountains, inaccessible to anyone but natives, the outside world knows nothing about them and their traditions. Most curious is the fact that this book has never been translated into any language, either Oriental or Occidental, and only two copies, besides the one in my possession, exist, one of which (claimed to be the original) I saw in Kotchanus; the other is owned by a Chaldean priest by the name of Kasha Denha. Considering the rarity of the book and its literary value, I decided to acquire it at any cost, but soon discovered that this was not an easy task, for no money could buy either of the two copies in existence. Finally I concluded to utilize the friendly relations established with the ascetic and spoke to him about the matter. After a little hesitation he

consented to help me out and told me that there was only one way of getting the book, namely, that he would order the original to be copied for me if I would bear the expense of the work. To this I consented gladly, and in the course of time the exact copy of it was made for me and sent to the city of Mosul, where I was stationed temporarily, as you know. Shortly after, I left that city, and not knowing where my next residence would be and not wishing to carry unnecessary burdens with me, I left there several books and other objects, including this latest acquisition of mine, which finally reached me here not long ago. This is the story of how I became the possessor of this rare book."

"Now I see why Carlyle is so embarrassed about the matter when he says, 'I know not what to make of that Sergius the Nestorian monk,'" said Mr. Milton thoughtfully. "Evidently he knew nothing of the story related by the Chaldean author."

"There is no doubt that he knew nothing whatever of the version given by the Chaldean, nor did any of the historians that he read know of the existence of Rabban Bhera," said Count Morat. "This is one more of many instances which teach us how history is sometimes made. Carlyle could relate only such a version as he found during his investigation of the matter. But after all, it matters very little whether the name of the individual who made the wild Arab what he eventually became was Sergius or Bhera. What interests us, if the story be true, is the fact that it was a Christian monk, and not the visionary archangel Gabriel, who was the promoter of the new creed, a mixture of Judaic, Christian, and pagan religions."

"But the motive, the motive!" exclaimed Mr. Milton.

"What do you think the Christian monk's motive was in undertaking such a work? Suppose the story is true. There must be some reason which prompted Rabban Bhera to write the Koran and inspire the simpleton Arab camel driver with the idea of his messiahship."

"Certainly there was a reason and that reason was exactly the same which prompted Martin Luther to create a new creed," answered Count Morat. "Both of these monks, Rabban Bhera in the seventh century and Martin Luther nine centuries after, found out that the old Bible of the Jews and the New Testament of the Christians were interpolated and falsified by those in power to suit their fancy. The only difference that we find between the two is that the German reformer—the Augustinian monk—nailed his famous ninety-five Latin theses on the door of the Schlosskirche at Wittenberg (October 31st, 1517) and the Nestorian monk expressed it in the Koran. You will agree with me that the only place where we can reasonably look for the motives of this monk is in the Koran itself. That book, the reading of which makes Carlyle say, 'nothing but a sense of duty could carry an European through the Koran,' is replete with statements to that effect, namely, that the Old and the New Testaments do not represent the word of God any more; and this serves admirably the cause of the writer, who gives it as the reason why Allah wished to dictate his will in the Koran. You said truly that Mahomet was an ordinary camel driver. That is exactly what he was; and the Koran was written in beautiful Arabic; for according to the testimony of Oriental scholars the Koran is the best literary work ever produced in that language. It is, they say, the gem of classics. This, and the other fact that Mahomet knew

not the art of reading and writing, confirms his followers in the belief that the Koran was dictated by God, word by word, sentence by sentence. Nothing new, it is true, for in this they simply follow the example of the Jews and the Christians, who claim divine origin for their respective books. But these very facts which confirm Mahometans in their belief, when denuded of the supernatural ascribed to them and looked upon from the point of possibilities, offer the best and strongest proof that the Koran was written by a man of literary training and erudition such as Rabban Bhera was."

"What about the messiahship of Mahomet?" inquired Mr. Milton. "Why did not the monk advocate his own cause instead of making Mahomet the head of it?"

"For the simple reason that the monk was not sincere," answered Count Morat. "Any undertaking that requires sacrifices can be carried out only by men who believe in it. The monk had a guilty conscience. Mahomet evidently believed in his preceptor and in the mission imposed upon him, for he was willing to make sacrifices. It was a hazardous game, and Mahomet won it."

"But now suppose all this story of Rabban Bhera is simply a legend, like thousands of them among the Orientals," said Mr. Milton.

"What of Carlyle's Sergius then? Shall we take him also for a legendary figure?" inquired the Count.

"The way Carlyle brings in his Sergius, is evidence that he does not believe much in him," said Mr. Milton. "Besides, there is nothing, so far as I can see, to corroborate the narrative of the Chaldean or make it more probable than the story of Sergius."

"I have different views on the subject," remarked

Count Morat. "The fact that Carlyle speaks of the Nestorian monk shows that the opinion that there was a Nestorian monk who taught Mahomet things he did not know, is a fact accepted by historians in general. Now who could preserve the records of the life and deeds of a Nestorian monk better than his co-religionists? When we consider that religion was not the only tie that connected the Nestorian monk in question with the Nestorian people, the argument becomes more interesting. The monk was a Chaldean, and the Nestorians of to-day who have preserved the traditions of their ancestors are also Chaldeans. Besides, when we note the gross inaccuracy of European historians dealing with Oriental nations, the evidence of which we have in abundance, the story of Rabban Bhera assumes a serious standing. On the other hand, why should we consider the opinion of Europeans more important in matters pertaining to the life and deeds of Orientals than that of the Orientals themselves? The fact is that European historians make Oriental history from the limited and oftentimes falsified information that they gather from unreliable Oriental sources. However, we must admit that the farther back we go into history, the greater is our difficulty in proving anything at all. Many episodes of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, of great interest to us, still remain in controversy. No wonder that the events of the seventh century, especially those pertaining to Oriental nations, are entirely obscure. But when we go still further back to the events which occurred in the beginning of our era—"

"Oh, those are well known to our theologians," interrupted Mr. Milton jestingly. "In fact they know more of the occurrences of nineteen hundred years ago

than those of our day. But after all, be it as it may, our theologians are fine scholars."

"Yes, they are, if only for the reason that they know things which nobody else would consider worth knowing. Personally, I like both of those gentlemen whom you are pleased to call our theologians. Under that name you place them on the same footing; but do you not think there is a great difference between the two?" inquired Count Morat.

"Yes, indeed," answered Mr. Milton. "Although Dr. Darling is my personal friend, I consider Dr. Stuart a far superior man, notwithstanding his pronounced orthodoxy."

"He is unquestionably a profound thinker," rejoined Count Morat. "What is most commendable in him is the fact that he is logical. Do you know, my friend, that in these days you will find mighty few men who are logical? They will think one way, and act another way. Dr. Stuart is a priest, and as long as he is one, he is orthodox. Perfectly correct. Well says the old proverb: '*Duos qui sequitur lepores, neutrum capit.*' Very true. 'He who pursues two hares, catches neither.' Dr. Darling is a priest, but the modern man in him takes the upper hand, and that is why he tries to reconcile science with religion. It is different with Dr. Stuart. He never forgets that the priesthood was not fabricated in our day. It belongs to the old order. He knows this and that is why he is orthodox. However, notwithstanding his orthodoxy, I expect great things of him in the near future. His mental evolution is making exceedingly rapid progress. Nothing will stop him half way."

"Now you surprise me, Count," exclaimed Mr. Mil-

ton. "Do you propose to pick dates from a willow tree? What can you expect of any Anglican priest but his official dignity?"

"Times are changed, my friend," said the Count. "People used to travel in an oxcart. Today they travel in the airships. Evolution does its work whether we are willing or not. I do not think you even suspect what is going on in the honest soul of Dr. Stuart. He will surprise you some day."

"That is true. We can expect anything in these days of aviation," said Mr. Milton, consulting his watch. "But, by the way, do you know, Count, today is Tuesday?"

"Oh, yes, that is so. Yonan," said Count Morat, turning to his servant, who was still standing in the farthest corner of the library, "see that dinner is served promptly, for tonight we have our meeting."

CHAPTER VI

A MYTH

The sumptuously furnished parlor of Count Morat's residence was brilliantly illuminated. The fascinating light, coming as it were from mysterious sources, filled the spacious room well, yet with a delicacy that was noticeable to the trained eye. There were no chandeliers or any other fixtures in evidence. The refulgent electric rays, as though produced by magic, were reflected from the ceiling above which, tinted as it were a bright golden hue, gave an effect that was marvelous. Yet there was nothing out of the ordinary. Fastened to the walls about twelve inches below the ceiling, a heavy, artistically carved moulding ran around the room. In a space of several inches between the upper part of the moulding and the wall were placed rows of electric lamps invisible to the observer. Thus the light produced by the unseen radiators first struck the ceiling, whence it was reflected into the room with an effect that was exceedingly pleasing and novel.

Here we find our old friends at the regular weekly reunion, which takes place every Tuesday evening. Count Morat, sitting comfortably in his armchair, is engaged in lively conversation with Dr. Stuart, who although recently acquainted with him, has become one of his warmest admirers.

Mr. Milton is listening attentively to his old friend and schoolmate, the Reverend Dr. Darling, who is explaining some intricate problems of interest to him.

The ever jovial Mr. Irving, in his sonorous voice, is narrating one of his latest experiences on a tramping trip on Mount Wilson to Dr. Ihringier, who has just finished the reading of his paper written for the occasion. The subject he presented was as interesting as it was instructive. It was entitled, "The Largest Lens in the World, at Mount Wilson Observatory." The doctor gave an exhaustive account of the recently established institution on the summit of this mountain, six thousand feet above the sea level, describing the scope of its multifarious scientific researches and the exceeding benefit derived from the findings to men of science, especially to astronomers. The paper was received with enthusiasm, and a discussion followed, which gradually, as it progressed, shifted to the personal experiences of those present in connection with their visits to the summit of the mountain where the celebrated observatory is located. When the subject was fairly well exhausted Mr. Milton announced that Mr. Irving would now take up current topics.

"Before I say anything," said Mr. Irving learnedly, "Mr. Milton must revise and reconstruct his announcement. Instead of plural, he must use the singular and say the *current topic*."

"What is coming now?" said Mr. Milton, looking surprised. "Why such a demand?"

"Simply because of late, or rather, to be more precise, ever since last Thursday, there has been only one topic in town which overshadows all the rest, including those of national and even international interest," answered Mr. Irving, with the expression of a man who knows what he is talking about.

"And that topic is?" suggested Mr. Milton.

"That the famous Dr. Terror has taken full possession of the town, and is mercilessly terrorizing it," ended Mr. Irving.

"There, there; is this an introduction to a story?" inquired Dr. Darling jestingly.

"Let him proceed with the topic," interposed Dr. Ihringier. "We will soon know whether he wants to give us a topic that is a story, or a story that he wishes to make a topic."

"That is right," rejoined Mr. Milton. "Let him give the topic. Please proceed," added he, turning to Mr. Irving.

"I would gladly," said Mr. Irving, somewhat embarrassed, "but unfortunately there is nothing for me to proceed with. The whole topic consists of what I already said."

"Well, well," exclaimed Dr. Darling. "Since when have you acquired the manner of the Laconians? Brief and pithy, brusque and epigrammatic. This particular style of Spartans is not becoming to you; do you know it, Mr. Irving?"

"Yes, indeed, I know it well, for naturally I am talkative," answered Mr. Irving, "but do you not think it safer for me to be a Spartan when the subject concerns a theologian?"

"This is becoming interesting," said Count Morat. "However, in order to proceed intelligently, we must have more information. Will you, Mr. Irving, tell us who this Dr. Terror is that you are speaking of?"

"Why, Count, you must be the only man in town who does not know who Dr. Terror is," said Mr. Irving, with evident surprise. "Dr. Terror is a preacher from Chicago. Since he came here the whole town is crazy

about him. Thousands and millions go to hear him. He is conducting revival meetings about seventy-seven times a day, and he does not seem to be tired of it."

"You did not say much," remarked Dr. Darling. "That Dr. Terror is preaching is only commendable. But how you came to the conclusion that he is terrorizing the town is what we should like to know."

"Why, he is terrorizing the people with hell," answered Mr. Irving. "He tells his audience that he knows positively that there is a hell with fire that burns, and that hell is for the people to be tortured in for eternity. I have heard you preaching, Dr. Darling, now for several years, but I never knew from you of a hell as he describes it."

"So you went to hear him, did you?" inquired the interlocutor.

"You know I am not much of a church goer, but my wife insisted that I should go to hear him, and to satisfy her, I went once," said Mr. Irving, looking guilty.

"And that once—" suggested the divine.

"Was just the day when he displayed his positive knowledge of the existence of hell," answered Mr. Irving imperturbably. "Terror is the right name for the man, I tell you. Why, my hair stood erect on my head like telegraph poles when I imagined the possibility of what he said."

"Was your wife with you?" asked Dr. Darling.

"Of course she was. She wanted to be sure that I attended the meeting, and the best way for her to know was to go along with me," answered Mr. Irving. "Why do you ask about my wife; do you doubt my statement?"

"Oh, no, no!" exclaimed Dr. Darling. "In ascertaining whether your wife was with you, I simply wanted to know whether she was equally terror-stricken."

"Terror-stricken, you say? Oh, no, by Jove," responded Mr. Irving. "Women folks think that hell is only for men. So she was quite satisfied that all was well. At any rate, she did not seem to be disturbed much with what she heard. Only from time to time when a big sentence fell from the pulpit, she whispered to me, 'Do you hear it, George?' Why, of course I heard it, and that is how I know what I am talking about."

"Your conscience must be in a bad shape, my friend, since you are afraid of hell," said Mr. Milton, laughing and offering him a big cigar.

"Never mind my conscience," retorted Mr. Irving, searching for his silver matchbox in his pockets. "But don't you know, it sounds ugly, this hell business."

"It does, undoubtedly," replied Dr. Darling, "but I do not see why you should be alarmed about it."

"I am not alarmed about hell, for there is no danger of my ever going to that place. I don't like a hot climate anyway," answered Mr. Irving complacently. "Besides, do not forget that we Episcopalians all go straight to heaven. What alarms me is the boldness of the man who says he knows positively that there is such a place."

"He simply states what he knows. Is he not entitled to his opinion?" asked Dr. Darling.

"Certainly he is, but if he knows there is a hell, he also must know where it is located; yet he did not say a word about that," ended Mr. Irving pathetically.

"You seem to be very anxious to know the exact location of the place," said Mr. Milton jestingly. "But evidently you overlook the fact that whether you know its location or not, as a Christian you are bound to believe in the existence of a hell."

"Nothing of the kind," answered Mr. Irving energetically. "I simply cannot believe in it. Impossible, impossible to believe in such a horror. It is too barbarous even for a barbarian."

"Then you lose your claim to Christianity," remarked Mr. Milton. "You will be considered a heretic, an abnegate, an apostate, an infidel, and a—"

"Hold on," exclaimed Mr. Irving. "I don't want any more titles than I can carry safely. The trouble is that we laymen cannot talk about these things intelligently. I know what I want to say, but somehow or other I do not know how to put it so as to convey my utmost abhorrence of it. What is the use? In a crowd of theologians, doctors and lawyers, I am the only mortal who must use plain language, and such language does not seem to carry weight."

"Precisely," rejoined Dr. Ihringier. "I feel duty bound to stand by my friend Mr. Irving. However, pleasantries aside, I confess I myself was greatly surprised, nay, wholly amazed, when I read in the papers the statement made by this Chicago man. Just think of a man of our age making such an assertion before an intelligent audience without blushing."

"What assertion, may I ask?" inquired Dr. Darling.

"The assertion of his positive knowledge of the existence of such a place. Now let me be frank with you gentlemen theologians," said Dr. Ihringier, turning to the two divines. "You know that I am not masquerad-

ing under the mantle of any creed, therefore I say what I think. When I read the statement mentioned I immediately concluded that Dr. Terror was either a first-class charlatan whose daring passed all the limits of decency, or, if honest, he was the greatest ignoramus of our age. Had he said that he was advancing the teachings of his church, he would have placed the responsibility upon the creed he represented. But when he said that he knew, which implies that he, personally, knew, that there was a hell, he assumed the responsibility himself, and he should, therefore, have stated how he knew it. However, there is only one kind of knowledge which is acceptable and satisfactory to all, and that is the empirical knowledge, which, of course, means a knowledge acquired by experience. Thus, if we follow the proper meaning of the word 'knowledge,' and admit what he said is true, we are bound to conclude that Dr. Terror has been in hell himself, and that is how he knows of its existence. But of course such an admission is contrary to the tenet of the religion he represents, which teaches that the denizens of hell, once there, never leave that place. This being the case, we have to admit, in conformity with his creed, that he has never been in hell; for if he had been, he would not be here tormenting the inhabitants of the Angel City. Consequently he does not know of the existence of such a place, empirically, and therefore he told an untruth, which is equivalent to deception, when he said that he knew that there was a hell. On the other hand, if he bases his knowledge upon hearsay, he gave the best possible proof of his shallow credulity and his total ignorance of our globe and the laws governing it. In my opinion it is an outrage, yes, an unpardonable

outrage, to permit a man of that calibre to advance his grotesque opinions as truths. It is an insult to the intelligence of men of today to have him deliver publicly such stuff as that."

"I wish you were not so hasty in your conclusions, doctor," said Dr. Darling gently. "The gentleman you are speaking of is an honest man and a zealous preacher, and as such he is far from being a charlatan. The teachings he preaches here in our city are the same he preaches wherever he is invited to speak. The existence of heaven and hell is an article of faith with us Christians. We believe in the teachings of our religion and that is how we know what we profess knowing. Because you do not or cannot see things the way we do, it does not follow that you are right and we are wrong. Besides, if we have to follow the accepted rule, we must respect the opinions of all men alike. This being the case, I do not know what authority you have for speaking as you do."

"This is taking a very serious turn," remarked Mr. Milton. "It is only proper that we should abide by the accepted principle of toleration. Yet I do not think that Dr. Ihringier committed an error in giving expression to his views, for he properly substantiated them by the logical deduction he made."

"Namely—", asked Dr. Darling.

"The deduction that Dr. Terror, having no empirical knowledge of the existence of hell, could not logically say that he knew that there was such a place," answered Mr. Milton.

"But you forget, my friend, that we have nothing to do with empirical knowledge," exclaimed Dr. Darling. "You can employ empirical knowledge in scien-

tific researches, but you cannot do so in matters of faith."

"Then matters of faith do not represent verifiable truths, nor can they stand investigation, and as such absolutely do not deserve the credence of a logically thinking man," replied Mr. Milton.

"Entirely materialistic idea," said Dr. Darling indifferently. "The trouble is that you want to measure things spiritual with meters and barometers of your own make, forgetful of the fact that the spiritual world cannot be subjected to the rules and regulations of your earthly life. It is one thing to reason as a man and another to believe as a Christian."

"In other words one must cease to be a man in order to be a Christian. Is that the idea?" inquired Dr. Thringier.

"Not at all, not at all," answered Dr. Darling, a little irritated. "Christianity is for men, not for horses, therefore only a man, and a good one too, can be a Christian. But when I say one thing is to reason as a man and another to believe as a Christian, I wish to state that articles of faith cannot be subjected to the reasoning of man simply because they came to us by revelation and we accept them as truths unconditionally. In other words, in matters spiritual we must suppress entirely the reasoning of the man and be guided by the faith of the Christian."

"Evidently you cannot dismiss this idea of suppression of reasoning," said Mr. Milton. "Once before we had this very discussion, but the more I hear you the better I see that this is one of those inevitable methods which theology cannot dispense with. The fact is that whenever you want to prove anything, you employ the

most refined reasoning known to logicians. But whenever reasoning fails you, you invariably use the argument you are using now. To show tangibly what I say is true, let me ask you a few questions. In the first place, will you please tell me—are heaven and hell places or do they represent only states or conditions?"

"According to the Scriptures, they are both places and conditions," answered Dr. Darling.

"In which, of course, you firmly believe, do you not?" inquired Mr. Milton.

"Most assuredly I do; so does the whole Christian church," replied Dr. Darling.

"I thought so," said Mr. Milton. "Now let me call your attention to the following. When Mr. Irving expressed his disappointment at Dr. Terror's failure to indicate the exact location of the hell he knew was in existence, he, I mean Mr. Irving, only followed a natural train of thought. Let me illustrate this. Should I tell you that I know a garden where cucumbers grow on a tree and oranges mature under the ground, do you not think you would immediately ask me where that garden was?"

"That would be only natural to those who know that cucumbers do not grow on trees, nor oranges ripen under the ground," answered Dr. Darling. "And as I happen to know these facts, it would be only natural for me to ask you such a question."

"Perfectly rational," remarked Mr. Milton thoughtfully. "You consider it natural for one who knows that cucumbers do not grow on trees to doubt the statement, and consequently ask for a proof by wishing to see the garden where such a phenomenon is produced. This being the case, what can be more natural than for

one who is told that there is a hell of which he knows nothing, to ask where that hell is located? In this illustration, as you observe, the principle involved is the *empirical knowledge*. We know what cucumbers and oranges are and how they grow. The moment we hear a statement contradictory to our experimental knowledge our curiosity is aroused, and naturally we look for a convincing proof, which necessarily must consist of something as tangible as the seeing of a cucumber growing on a tree. Now, if in a trivial case like this the empirical knowledge plays such an important rôle, how much more necessary its application must be in a matter so important as the belief in a cruel conception of a hell? Do you not think it natural for me to say that if you know and believe that there is a hell, you must also know where that hell is? Now then, will you tell me where that horrid place is located?"

"Your query is equivalent to the impermissible attempt to fathom the destinies of man and question the wisdom of God," said Dr. Darling didactically. "The Holy Scriptures do not tell us, nor do the fathers of the church say anything about the exact location of these places. All we know is the high above and the deep below. It is evident that the Lord did not wish us to know the location of the abode where we receive our reward or punishment, as the case may be."

"I should consider it a sad state of affairs indeed, did I not know that the existing limitation supposedly imposed by the good Lord in this instance is just the thing that best suits the theologians," said Mr. Milton; "for had the people an exact notion of the matter, you would have nothing left to speculate upon. As it is, you are having your hands full with problems for the

people to solve. However, let us proceed with further inquiries. Now, will you tell me the purpose of heaven and hell?"

"Any schoolboy will answer you that," replied Dr. Darling indifferently. "Heaven is the place where a good man receives his reward for the virtuous life he has lived, and hell where the vicious and wicked one is punished."

"I beg your pardon," interrupted Dr. Ihringier. "Your statement is not correct. A boy attending a Sunday-school might answer that way, but a lad who knows nothing of your teaching will offer no answer at all."

"In other words," resumed Mr. Milton, addressing the divine, "these places are made purposely to carry on justice. Is that it, doctor?"

"That is the sense of the teaching. You cannot deny the fact that we men, as limited as we are, have a sense of justice. Now, if we have a sense of justice, how much more He who is the only just must have? Do you not find this logical?" inquired Dr. Darling.

"Yes, indeed, perfectly logical," answered Mr. Milton; "in fact so potentially logical that I will use it as the safest pattern for my argument. In order to show the necessity of justice in God, you start your premises on what you find in man. Splendid idea. Now, notwithstanding all the sense of justice that men possess, do you think an intellectual and thoughtful man of to-day, had he a hell at his disposal, would throw in it one of his fellowmen, no matter how grave the nature of the committed crime? The man who would perform such a brutal act would be peremptorily and with no hesitation whatever condemned by all high and noble-

minded people. It is true that the men of this category are few, for we still have in our midst a class of people who willingly commit any sort of cruelty at the slightest provocation, or even no provocation whatever. Nay, we have worse than that. There is today a set of fashionable nonentities for whom cruelty is a sport. These people exist in our day as others existed in the past. Nero was perfectly delighted and exceedingly happy when he saw Rome burning. Nay, by this barbarous act of destruction instigated by him, which caused untold sufferings to the then inhabitants of that city, according to some historians he was elated to such an extent that he composed self-laudatory and boastful verses, and sang them in the face of the calamity in a theatrical fashion that was known only to him. One of the greatest enjoyments of this cruel matricide was to spend hours witnessing the excruciating sufferings and indescribable agonies of burning humanity. Men, women and children of all ages were tied to poles erected for that purpose in his sumptuous gardens and burned alive. These burning torches, representing a heartbreaking picture of human distress and misery, constituted a sort of amusement which Nero enjoyed intensely. This was many centuries ago, but unfortunately we still have Neroes in our midst, although in a somewhat modified form. They are to be found not only among individuals, but there are masses who represent these bloodthirsty monsters. The bull fight and the cock fight are still in vogue and quite fashionable in the gallant old Spain and Latin Americas. Even we, under the glorious shadows of the stars and stripes, notwithstanding our boasted civilization, are not free from that stain, for we have something analo-

gous for our share of savages. We pay fashionable prices to witness barbarous wrestling, a display of brutes and the brutal force, and our progressive newspapers devote columns upon columns to this most disgusting sport. This being the case, it is only natural that as long as we have the cruelty loving element in our midst, we are bound to have a hell and a Dr. Terror to preach it. They will insist on having a hell of unspeakable tortures in which to put their neighbors and those who think differently from what they do. However, most deplorable is the fact that this dreadful sentiment is cultivated particularly in the hearts of those preaching forgiveness and mercy. Can any one imagine a pious Methodist without a hell? He must have it, of course not for himself, but for others who do not believe the way he does. But of these we do not speak. I am considering only the best specimen of men of today. As few as they are, they exist.

"While, as you say, we possess the sense of justice, you must take into consideration the fact that we also possess another sense which tells us that we profit nothing by throwing a man into eternal tortures, should we have the power to do so. The sense of our human laws has its origin in the law of self-preservation. We confine criminals in prisons maintained at an expenditure of millions upon millions, simply to protect ourselves. They are there not so much for the purpose of being punished as to make them innocuous to the community at large. By doing this we are following the imperative exigencies of natural laws. Parallel with this runs another sentiment, however, which is rapidly developing in our midst, and which is expressed in the tendency to reform criminals. To teach them, to inspire them with

desires that are lofty and noble and make them not only harmless, but actively useful to themselves and to the community they belong to, is the predominant and supreme idea that guides the thoughts of the best men of our day. From this you see quite clearly that hell as a place of punishment is entirely useless; nay, the idea of it is abhorrent and decidedly repulsive to every noble-minded man. Since you have taken your premises on the human ground, let me use this instance and ask you if we men, no matter how limited in number, abhor the idea of a hell, how much more must He who is infinitely better and nobler than the best man? This logic, as you see, is formulated according to the pattern of your construction. I am simply following your method of reasoning. And now, can you say that you are not reasoning, doctor?"

"Reasoning, reasoning," repeated Mr. Irving emphatically, "of course it is reasoning. I never heard Dr. Darling preach without employing the strong reasoning which makes his sermons famous. But what is the use? Although I am not a theologian, I grasp the idea, and let me tell you gentlemen that when Dr. Darling insists upon the suppression of reasoning, he is guided by the highest reasoning known to men. Am I not right, doctor?"

"Of course you are. Most assuredly you are correct. I never thought Mr. Irving capable of such profound philosophy," remarked Dr. Darling with evident satisfaction. "For the higher truths, only higher reasoning is proper. But, after all, I do not see the object of this discussion. You gentlemen do not believe in the Christian doctrine, therefore I know not why the articles of our faith should be discussed here at all."

"We are discussing only a current topic, and this, you know, belongs to our weekly program," rejoined Dr. Ihringier. "However, if you think the subject out of place, blame your parishioner who brought it up for discussion."

"There is no one to be blamed," said Mr. Milton thoughtfully. "This is a matter of public interest. We discuss the merits and failures of the utterances of our diplomats and statesmen. We analyze and sound the views and sayings of any man that comes before the public, and I do not see why we cannot discuss publicly delivered views and utterances of a preacher, should we choose to do so.

"This gentleman comes from a distant city many thousand miles away to this city of three hundred thousand inhabitants to deliver a series of lectures commonly known as revival meetings. The question of who brought him here, or how much is he paid for his trouble, we will not enter into. Every man who performs a certain amount of work, no matter what the nature of his labor, is entitled to his pay. But when we come to the utterances of such a man, it is only proper that we should consider them and give expression to our opinions. The fact is that this man stood before a large and intelligent audience and solemnly declared that he knew positively that there was a hell, a place of untold and eternal tortures, ready to devour any and all of his hearers should they reject his advice and fail to follow the rules of life expounded by him. This fact is sufficient to induce us to discuss his statement. While I respect the opinions and beliefs of my fellow men, nothing can prevent me from giving expression to my own. Gentlemen, this preaching of hell in our

day is becoming too ridiculous to deserve any consideration. I am certain there is not one man in this whole community who believes in a hell such as Dr. Terror and others like him are pleased to describe. It is time that preachers abstain from such monstrous talk if they wish to be honored as honest men. The public of today is no longer in its infancy. Santa Claus is a reality only to very young children. But even they, long before they reach their sixth birthday, realize the fabulous origin of this time-honored custom. It makes no difference whether it is a so-called revelation or tradition which is responsible for this dreadful myth. A myth is a myth, and must be looked upon as a myth. The people of today are a lot of desperate Missourians. They want to be shown, and this is only proper. If you cannot substantiate your statement by facts, you had better desist from your pious impulses, no matter how honest they may appear to you.

"Most ridiculous, however, is the conflict arising from the teachings concerning this terrible place. On one hand they teach that the human soul is immaterial; on the other hand they assert that this immaterial soul, should it deserve punishment, will be burned in the fire of hell, which is material. Now can any one imagine a more farcical combination? If the human soul is immaterial, that is to say, if it has no qualities or attributes belonging to things material, how can it be burned by a fire which is material? If that fire is not material, then it is not fire such as we know fire to be; therefore of what use is this talk of a fire, the nature of which we do not know? In brief, the whole subject is too foolish, nay, too barbarous, to deserve the attention of any thinking man. But, as Mr. Irving has rightly said, it

is not hell that alarms us; it is the stupendous boldness of an hireling who tells an advanced public that the fables of many thousand years ago are truths revealed by God. Oh, what a degradation of human dignity!"

"Do not be so tragic about it," exclaimed Dr. Ihringier. "That the most of the Christian practices are derived from those of the pagans is a fact well known to all who are familiar with the subject. Owing to this, what more natural than the conception of a hell based on mythological fables? Just think how nicely the story is made up. Many centuries before the Christian era, Greeks and Romans believed that the race of giants made war against Jupiter and that one of them threw a hundred rocks against him at one throw, and that the all-powerful Jupiter defeated him with thunder and confined him afterwards under Mount Etna, and since that day every time the giant turns himself Mount Etna belches fire. Do you not see how Etna being a volcano suggests the idea of the fable? This is the Greek version of it. Now the Christian mythologists tell us that Satan made war against the Almighty, who defeated him and confined him afterwards, not under the mountain, but in a pit. Here we see plainly how the first fable suggested the second; for we all know that the fable of Jupiter and the giants preceded that of the Christians by many hundreds of years. You well said that a myth must be looked upon as a myth. But so long as this story of hell, mythical as it is, is still enshrined within the sanctuary of theological verity, for some people there will be a hell, as you remarked a little while ago, and a Dr. Terror to preach it."

"But, look here," exclaimed Mr. Irving impatiently, "the story you told in the first place concerns the giant,

and in the second, Satan. Now I care nothing about these two gentlemen, whether they are in a pit or under a mountain. You are entirely wrong if you think the Chicago man was alluding to the places occupied by them. The place he was speaking about must be entirely different, for it is a place of torture for mankind. Can you perceive the idea?"

"Of course I perceive the idea," answered Dr. Ihringier. "However, by giving the quoted extracts from mythologies, I simply wanted to show how the idea originated. But when we come to the conceptions preached by the learned Chicago man, I have to add that while the poetical mythology of the Greeks served as a skeleton for the structure, the barbaric cruelty of the Jews controlled its management. The idea of dispatching mankind to hell is entirely Jewish. It is enough to read some portions of the Bible to see clearly that only Jews could have conceived such a horrid notion. This is strongly corroborated when we consider the predominant characteristics exclusively that nation's, which unquestionably consist of delight in all sorts of unspeakable and revolting cruelties, of which the quoted book is the best monument. The pagan Greeks were nobler men. They never had a hell such as Dr. Terror teaches today. They sent the departed souls of their kind to the valley of shadows, of which they spoke reverently. It is true, they had a place called Tartar where such personages as Tantalus, Ixion, the king of Thessaly, Sisyphus, the king of Corinth, Danaides, the daughters of Danaus, the king of Argos, and Tityos the Giant from Euboea, were confined, but there was no fire there to torment them. In fact the Greeks' hereafter had nothing repulsive, even when they dealt with their crim-

inals. There was the ever-ready old man, the calm and serene Charon, waiting with his boat to take new arrivals over the River Styx to their destination. His passengers had to pay their fares, just as we do in these commercial days when we take a ferryboat, and this toll was called Naulon. To enable departed souls to meet this exigency, the Greeks had a pious custom of putting a silver coin in the mouth of their dead, so they might pay the inevitable passage over the river, and this coin was called Danake. When on the other side of the River Styx, the people busied themselves much the same as they did while living in Greece and Italy. Thus we see that the pagan Greeks and Romans never associated repugnant ideas with departed souls. It was the exclusive privilege of the Jews to practice untold cruelties, not only while they were butchering each other in the promised land, where the imaginary rivers of honey and milk flowed, but they assigned these cruelties to infinite eternity and left it to Dr. Terror and his associates to attend to their perpetual workings."

"The reverend gentleman is doing his best, I am sure," said Mr. Irving timidly. "As for the associates, if that means the rest of the clergy, I don't know whether they are doing half as well in this matter. However, it strikes me that what you said pertains to the Jews, and that decidedly does not interest me. What we are considering now is the Christian idea of hell, which, in my estimation, must be altogether different from that of the Jews."

"But there is no such thing as a Christian idea of hell," exclaimed Dr. Ihringier. "It is evident that you are not aware of the fact that you are a worshipper of Jewish ideas exclusively. The structure of the Chris-

tian faith rests solely on the foundation laid by the Jews. Without the Jewish tradition you cannot sustain the Christian creed."

"I beg your pardon," exclaimed Mr. Irving, "but I cannot understand what the Jews have to do with our faith. In fact, as far as I know, there always was and still continues to exist an antagonistic spirit between the Jews and the Christians amounting to a hatred that is almost invincible. This being the case—"

"Oh, how childish you are, Mr. Irving," interrupted Mr. Milton. "Were it not for the Jews, there would be no Christians. The first teachers of Christianity were Jews. In fact, during the first one hundred years of our era there was not one prominent man in the field for the propagation of the Christian creed who was not either a newly converted Jew, or a descendant of that race. The first fifteen bishops of Jerusalem were all circumcised Jews.* But it is most important to note that while they professed the new faith evidently with sincerity, their tendencies, their mode of thinking, their conceptions of good and evil, their sense of justice, their likes and dislikes and other characteristics were still Jewish; and it was such men or their descendants that made the Christian creed, which gradually assumed the form now known and practiced by the nations professing that faith. In brief, the Jews, and at that the primitive and crude Jews, were the lawgivers of the Christians. They shaped and moulded the code of ethics as they saw fit and transplanted it over the seas, assuring their newly made proselytes that what they fabricated came directly from God, of course the God of their conception, Jehovah, and the newly converted na-

* Ed. Gibbon, Vol. I, Chap. XV, p. 516. Milman Ed.

tions never doubted it. They believed, just as their ancestors believed, in what they were told in their turn ages and ages ago. Thus you see, my dear friend, that the Jews had a great deal to do with your faith.

"When the distinguished English statesman, Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield, in reply to a speech delivered by him in the house of Lords, was confronted by his opponent, with the express intention of insulting him, with the fact that he was a Jew, he instantly arose, a giant, and paralyzed the dignified assembly of English Solons by telling them that it was a Jew whom the whole of Europe deified and worshipped, and a Jewess, the only woman, whom more than one half of it venerated. As shocking and incredible as the statement may appear to be, it conveys only a verifiable truth. Whether we know it or not, and whether we wish it or not, the cold fact remains that we are governed by a set of conceptions exclusively of Judaic origin."

Hearing this, Mr. Irving's honest face assumed the expression of a man whose wit had abruptly come to an end, and looking like a defeated hero, he said nothing more.

Up to this time Count Morat and Dr. Stuart had remained silent. They had listened attentively to the argument, mainly observing the deductions made by the four men who differed so widely from one another. Only from time to time, when a more radical point was brought out in the discussion, did they exchange comments. But now that the subject seemed exhausted, after a momentary silence Dr. Stuart began to speak.

"Gentlemen," said he, turning to the now silent Mr. Irving and those who took part in the discussion, "your reasoning, succinct as it is, reveals the fact that while

each one of you throws a different light on the subject you were discussing, you overlook its most vital factor, one of prime import. That the Christian religion is based upon the revelations imparted by the Jewish prophets, no one can deny. That there are still in vogue in the Christian church, especially in the Roman Catholic, some practices which originated in the ancient customs of the pagans, no one who is familiar with the history of the transitory epoch between paganism and Christianity, will ever dispute. But while the basic principles still remain the same, the structure of the Christian faith of today has assumed a character that is entirely different from that of the past, and essentially modern. We are living in an age of utilitarianism. The predominant tendencies of the modern man are to advocate all things that are useful and discard those of no utility. Here is the ground upon which we are bound to base our issue. Following this idea, the question that we have to face is, of what use is the Christian religion? Dealing with this subject, we have two distinct view points to consider. One is exclusively theological and deals with the technicality of the structure of the teachings constituting the creed as a creed, and another the application of the same to the everyday life of individuals as well as to whole communities, and this must be treated both theologically and philosophically, having in view, however, above all the practical utility of it, which necessarily must be demonstrable and efficient. As to why the former must be considered exclusively from the theological point of view, I need not dwell, for your discussion, short and desultory in details as it was, clearly demonstrated that matters pertaining to faith cannot be subjected to the rules and

regulations of modern philosophy. This happens for the simple reason that the logic of the modern man, based upon and regulated as it is exclusively by empirical truths, is entirely inadmissible in the province of theological reasoning. Theology does not employ empirical truths; its exclusive domain being a set of revelations, and revelations are not empirical truths in the strictest sense postulated by the principles of natural sciences. Owing to the lack of proper understanding of this principle, many clergymen of today place themselves in a ridiculous position when they try to argue that the faith they advocate can be subjected to the scrutiny of modern methods of thinking. No theologian, no matter how accurate his reasoning, can prove satisfactorily to a scientifically thinking man that this world of ours was created only a few thousand years ago, and in one week's time. He cannot prove that the Biblical earth, which is firm, meaning motionless, is the same which rotates, nor that the stars are not suns, and much less that there is a hell which will devour all and every one who does not think and believe the way he does. That is the idle fancy and hopeless guesswork of those who for the mere display of their erudition, which is usually very shallow, are using this system of reasoning. Theology cannot be supported by empirical truths, decidedly, for no matter where we start, we are bound to lose the game. I repeat, there is no place for empirical knowledge in matters of faith. Owing to this fact, it would be utterly useless to attempt to prove the existence of hell on any other ground than that of faith. Whether reasonable or not, whether fact or fiction, of Jewish or Greek origin, it being an article of our faith, it is our

duty to accept it and believe in it firmly. Similarly, we are bound to accept the whole of our creed, no matter how foolish it may appear to the modern man who is guided by empirical knowledge. Gentlemen, the Christian church is an absolute autocrat. She does not reason. She dictates her teachings and her children must obey. Yes, they must obey if they wish to be her children. This is in substance the stand the church takes, and this stand is firmly supported by those who march under the standard of Christianity. In confirmation of this, let me use the incident you were discussing a little while ago. While speaking of Dr. Terror, Mr. Irving, carried away by his enthusiasm, declared that thousands and millions went to hear him. Omitting the fanciful millions, he did not exaggerate when he said that thousands attended the meetings in question. Now, gentlemen, you know well that no one ran after these thousands with a stick in hand, threatening to break their necks should they be inclined to refuse to go to hear the Chicago man. They went there without constraint, willingly, gladly—and why so? Notwithstanding the horror-stricken Mr. Irving; notwithstanding the terrifying description of the hell preached there, they were there morning, noon, and night. And why; what made these thousands go to hear a man whom Dr. Ihringier is pleased to call a charlatan, or at best an ignoramus? Yes, why? Will you answer this *why*? A little reflection will doubtless suggest the answer that these thousands went there simply because they were born and raised Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, Anabaptists, or because they belonged to some one of the other over one hundred Christian denominations. Yes, they went there because

they were Christians and the teachings of the Chicago man conveyed a message of the creed they professed. While this is true, should we search closely this seemingly natural impulse of the masses, we will discover that the mere fact of their being Christians does not in itself constitute the real motive, hidden under different names. There were other Christians who did not attend the meetings. The real motive which guided them so potently is their full knowledge of its utility. The masses as well as individuals are aware of the sad fact that the majority of people, being in slavery to their oftentimes brutal passions, are dangerous to the peace and welfare of the community, and as such they must be checked and guided by some power that is stronger than their defective reasoning, and this power is the religion they profess. Day after day, year after year, they witness crimes committed in their midst. Dishonesty, murders, rapines, and corruptions of all descriptions are of everyday occurrence. Prisons are filled with people of all ages and both sexes. Rich and poor, high and low are there. Many crimes are prevented by fear of the law; but there are a good many criminals who dexterously evade its clutches and gain undeserved immunity. It is this tremendously onerous evil that the community at large wishes to annihilate through the instrumentality of religious teachings. If persuasion for the good and attraction to virtue fails and hell accomplishes the design, then let it be hell, terrible as it is, burning, excruciating, eternal. Yes, let it be hell, if heaven is to be gained. Mr. Milton's criticism that the idea of a hell is cultivated exclusively by those preaching mercy and forgiveness, will entirely alter its aspect should he take the standing the church

takes. Each and every human act necessarily carries its consequences. If good and virtuous deeds are to be commended, the wicked and vicious are to be condemned, and this is as logical as anything that comes under that heading. However, all of this reasoning does not amount to anything should we dismiss the principle of utility. It is the consciousness of this utility that is at the bottom of everything. People want to be good simply because goodness brings happiness and this happiness is the sole aim and object of everyone. This is what religion promises, and this is why the masses go to hear the man who preaches hell."

"You are a splendid philosopher, my dear doctor," said Count Morat, addressing Dr. Stuart. "That is evident from the exceedingly subtle reasoning you have displayed in what you have just said. But you forget for the moment that before all you are an Anglican priest. The standing you so aptly assign to the religion you profess is an individual effort of your own to give the existing order justifiable ground. It is a masterly conceived attempt to silence the ever-growing outcry against doctrines contrary to reason and to everyday common sense. This shows palpably that you have lived through all imaginable phases of your theological speculation, and finding yourself in doubt, as an ultimate resort you have thrown yourself at the mercy of your own reasoning in the realm of philosophy. Your church knows nothing of the ground of utility you ascribe to her teachings. She teaches only dogmas, and these dogmas, consisting of a set of unintelligible verbiages, not only do not represent anything useful, but, on the contrary, are essentially harmful, inasmuch as they convey doctrines totally devoid of ver-

ifiable truths. Owing to this, most of the practices of your church are entirely irrational and decidedly ridiculous. However, when we come to your personal views, while I cannot but admire you for the vigor of your argument, I wish to call your attention to the following: Humanity as a whole lives through the ages by degrees, the same as an individual does. A method perfectly satisfactory when applied to a child, becomes ridiculous in mature age. A tender but thoughtless mother, wishing to eliminate the possibility of even the remotest danger, scares her child, telling the baby stories of bugbears and monsters that will devour it should it go astray. An anxious father invents and tells a thrilling story full of tragic occurrences for the purpose of impressing his young son with the possibility of deplorable consequences, similar to those in the narrative, that will follow should he do things which his father thinks perilous for him. But the baby and the young man, gradually, as they grow older, learn through their own experiences that the parents were trying to make them good by inculcating in them the dreadful sensation of fear, little thinking of the fact that fear is as dangerous a factor in the upbuilding of young characters as it is destructive in its consequences. We know by actual observation that those subject to it represent the most pitiful type of humanity, being morally crippled all their lives. The first and the most deplorable fruition of fear, unquestionably, is suspicion, which gradually, as it grows, makes these unfortunate individuals a burden to themselves and to those with whom they come in contact. They suspect and actually see evil everywhere. Most lamentable is the fact that this is an affliction, oftentimes incurable, in-

tionally and artificially inculcated for the express purpose of making people good; but, unfortunately, the final result in most cases shows that individuals subject to suspicion, which is the first-born of fear, instead of becoming good and kind, fall pitiful prey to a host of imaginary phantoms under the name of evil and evildoers, and as such they irrevocably deprive themselves of needful peace and relative happiness, and are unbearable to all. These illustrations are taken from life. They represent everyday occurrences, and are observable by everyone interested.

"The epoch of making people good through fear unquestionably belongs to the past. Humanity of the day when the Jews were the lawgivers is not like the humanity of our day. The race has outgrown that stage and is rapidly entering the age of reason. The set of teachings formulated nearly two thousand years ago has served its purpose and can do no more good, for the people of today decidedly do not believe in it as implicitly as did those in the past; and this is only natural. While the stand you assign to it, namely that of utility, is perfectly rational and may appeal to many, I cannot see the necessity of the old, worn-out method you are advocating. In your exalted enthusiasm you exclaim, *'let it be a hell, if the heaven is to be gained!'* I would willingly agree with you were this method infallible, but, alas, this is not the case. For nineteen hundred years heaven and hell have been preached, yet the evildoers are as numerous today as they ever were before. In fact, their number has attained phenomenal growth in our day. This you know as well as I do. Does not this show convincingly the fallacy of gaining heaven through fear of hell? In

contrast to your remark I would say if there is no other way of gaining heaven, meaning good and happiness, except through the fear of hell, then that heaven is a mighty poor thing and a decidedly undesirable object to an intelligent man. In brief, my dear friend, the use of the old myths in this connection appears to me senseless and utterly ridiculous. The worst part of it is the fact that Sunday after Sunday you stand before the masses, invested with the dignity of your calling as a teacher and leader of men, and with the ostentatious solemnity at the command of your church, you promulgate these puerile Jewish myths as truths dictated by God, forgetful of the fact that nowadays the only acceptable truth is the empirical truth, which, of course, means a truth the knowledge of which is acquired by actual experience and which, once demonstrated, is demonstrable at any time. That the myths do not represent empirical truths needs no argument. Considering the amount of intellect invested in the teachings of these myths and the fact that they are preached solely to make the people good, why, in the name of honesty, do you not find a way to make the people good without telling them the story of the myths? Is there no way to reach the desired goal without this fictitious stragem? That there is a way is shown by the verifiable fact that today there is more commercial honesty in both hemispheres than ever before. Merchants have learned by experience that honesty pays better. We hear that even among Orientals this conviction is becoming a standard. (I am referring here to Japan.) A well known gentleman of this city, who deals extensively in lands, told me not long ago that he made his fortune simply because he employed honesty in his deal-

ings. "Why should I be dishonest, when honesty pays me better?" said he in closing. Of course the question will arise here as to what constitutes mercantile honesty; what merchants mean in this case is the entire elimination of wilful and intentional deception in commercial transactions. Now, then, this honesty which is gradually becoming a leading factor in the mercantile world certainly was not inspired by the fear of hell nor by the promises of heaven. Its value was detected in its practical results. This being the case, I ask you again,—why do you not teach your followers to be good for the good results that follow good deeds? Why do you not teach them plain honesty without the bugbears and the monsters? Why do you not rather acquaint them with the stupendous law of causation, which is the only regulator of human acts? If you commit evil, you create evil causes; the evil results will necessarily follow and these you will have to suffer. If you do a good deed, you set good causes in motion; good results will inevitably follow, and these you will enjoy. Is there anything more simple than these principles? They are rational and perfectly accessible to the understanding of everyone. By this method you are bound to make people good for goodness' sake. What is more important, good and evil consequences will be pointed out as the merited rewards and punishments justly belonging to those creating respective causes. Now, do you not think this method preferable to employing senseless and worn-out myths? The conception of a hell and its horned devils, that of a heaven full of winged angels, and even that of the Jewish God, are nothing more than clumsy myths of Judaic origin."

"Evidently you forget the fact, my dear Count," said

Mr. Milton, "that Dr. Stuart is not familiar with the law of causality and its application to the events of everyday life. How can you expect him to teach a set of laws of which he knows practically nothing?"

"I am not altogether ignorant of the set of views in question," interrupted Dr. Stuart. "However, I confess my knowledge of that system of philosophy is very limited. While I acknowledge the importance of its tenet, for the Latin proverb well has it, '*felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas*,'—that is to say, happy he who is able to ascertain the causes of things,—I am positive it cannot be acceptable for purely practical reasons. The masses have not grown to that stage as yet. Philosophy, to start with, requires an asset of a mass of information in addition to the ability to think, and this is not within the reach of everybody. It is religion that stimulates their action and this is what they need most. Washington expresses it well in his memorable 'Farewell Address' when he says: 'Let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion.'"

"Morality which cannot stand on its own merit is as undesirable as the religion which advocates it," said Count Morat contemplatively. "A mathematical truth is a truth, not because Pythagoras said so, but because it is exact in its presentation and accessible to our verification. The sole aim and object of moral or ethical principles is to insure people's happiness. This being the case, it is the necessity that arises at a given time which determines the character and tenor of the moral principles required. Hence whatever makes the majority of people happy is moral. Whatever disturbs this happiness is immoral. Owing to the fact that the

happiness of people two thousand years ago cannot and does not constitute the happiness of people today, the conceptions of morality of the former cannot regulate the life of the latter. Notwithstanding this self-evident fact, you insist on imposing this set of old conceptions upon the people of the present day. It is most lamentable that these conceptions have their origin in a set of obscure and out of date traditions. In advocating them, as you do, you justify your method by the appeal you make to antiquity, forgetful of the fact that the law of progression peremptorily precludes retrogression. This happens for the simple reason that when you have reached the tenth step on the scale of your upward destiny, you do not need to start from the first in order to reach the eleventh. Your goal being your forward journey, you march ahead, never thinking of the steps you left behind, although you know that without them you could not have reached your present stage.

"The saying that morality cannot be maintained without religion is one of the many phrases of the flowery eloquence of a theologian, whose business is to advocate the religion he officially professes. Any such saying as this, actuated as it is by selfish motives, is decidedly valueless, so much so that when we consider that what you call religion is a set of conceptions and views originated by the Jews of olden times and enlarged upon during the last nineteen hundred years, we cannot fail to see the fallacy of such a claim. This happens not because the originators were Jews, but because they were crude and barbarous Jews, who could neither comprehend the fragments of folklore from a source foreign to them which they undertook to present

as their own, nor imitate it in a manner that would insure the desired durability. Owing to this, the puerile Judaic views irrevocably lost their vigor as the race progressed during the last nineteen hundred years. It is unreasonable, nay ridiculous, to expect that the race of today should act and think according to the pattern of the primitive Jews, and much less can we think of submitting ourselves to the regulations prompted by their coarse and limited intellectuality. Nations other than those adhering to the Jewish teachings also have moral principles of their own. These regulate their lives with as much practical efficiency as can reasonably be expected. But this you do not seem to notice. Whether knowingly or unknowingly, you ignore all that is not originated by the Jews. Owing to this fact, the horizon within the limits of which you speculate is very small, and the result is that your conceptions of morality, of good and evil, are equally small and immeasurably partial. If you wish to be fair and unbiased, you must not confine yourself solely within the limits of Judea and Judaic ethics. Palestine is not the whole world. You must enlarge your horizon and take into consideration the rest of the world, which represents several large continents with a population that numerically exceeds many times those adhering to Judaic jurisprudence, a piteously clumsy imitation of what they borrowed from nations older than their own. A thorough knowledge of a set of moral principles based upon and regulated by empirical truths would radically change your attitude, should you undertake to investigate and acquaint yourself with that system of philosophy. But you are *a priori* afraid of philosophy. This is undoubtedly due to your theological training,

which peremptorily forbids the use of such reasoning as is commanded by modern philosophy, which is an element destructive to the structure of the mythical sophistry constituting its tenet. Yet philosophy does not mean anything but love of wisdom, and this wisdom, you will agree with me, is a supremely profitable acquisition to all men. Knowledge, and the capacity to make due use of it; knowledge of the best ends and the best means; discernment and judgment; discretion and sagacity; skill and dexterity; all of this is wisdom, a quality much desired in all things we undertake. What is more important, without this, no principle of morality can be enforced. On the contrary, the absence of these qualities necessarily incapacitates all efforts, no matter from what source they come. This being the case, why should not these principles constitute the sole guiding power in our discernment of moral principles, without recourse to the old nonsensical myths of the Jews? If morality is the object we have in view, and these principles can safely insure their cultivation and maintenance, of what use are the fables of two thousand years ago? That these principles are sufficient to produce the desired effect is evident from the fact that without them no man is responsible for the deeds he commits. You cannot expect to practice moral principles without due discernment and judgment. It takes discretion and sagacity to value and abide by a moral deed; and skill and dexterity must necessarily follow the knowledge of the best ends and the best means. One must have knowledge of the character of his deed in order to make due use of it. This, however, no man can know unless he is guided by the principles enumerated.

"In connection with this, naturally the question will arise as to what should constitute the basis of morality. In other words, what should be our criterion in the discernment of moral principles? To this supremely important question you yourself have furnished an answer that is admirably well conceived. While arguing in behalf of the teachings of your creed, you pointed out very eloquently indeed the importance of the principle of utility, by virtue of which you attempted to justify the system of preaching now in force, which involves a series of mythical conceptions. Whether such a justification is rational and admissible at all you can judge for yourself after mature consideration of all that is said on the subject. But when you come to the value you place on the principle of utility, your opinion of it assumes a standing that is vigorously meritorious inasmuch as it answers our question in full, and as such it constitutes the only rational solution of the problem. Many deep thinkers of international repute, beginning with Aristotle, the founder of the school of Peripatetics, down to men of our day,—among whom the late eminent Englishman, Herbert Spencer, unquestionably holds the most distinguished place,—have pondered over this question very gravely. However, judging from the differences in the opinions they have expressed in their respective conclusions, one might be inclined to consider the problem unsolvable. Yet to me it seems a matter of simplest construction. Should we be logical enough to permit ourselves to be guided solely by empirical truth, we will not fail to come to the one and the inevitable conclusion that utility is the only foundation of all morals. Any act, any principle, which does not embody utility, is not and cannot be moral. All

human deeds actuated by ethical principles are moral as long as they are beneficial to the majority of people. They create harmony and contentment and insure a relative happiness. The moment they cease to produce the desired effect, they are no longer moral. Hence utility, the only criterion of morals,—and this utility can be dictated only by the necessity which arises in the course of the growth of the race. Thus it becomes clear that the imposition of moral principles by any other than human agency is as irrational as the supposition that men are made for morals and not morals for men would be. The idea of the intrinsic value of a given act is entirely erroneous. There is no act which is good or bad in the same degree to all people and at all times. All human acts are conditional as to their merit or demerit on the conception of utility people have at a given time, which conception is actuated by the inevitable intellectual growth constituting the law of progression governing the whole race. This self-evident fact peremptorily precludes the idea of the intrinsic value of human acts. This we know empirically.

“In brief, from what was said it is evident that a set of principles based upon and regulated by empirical truths is the only rational method for the guidance of morals; and the introduction of this system into practice is the only and the greatest blessing that can befall humanity. This is what we need today, my dear friend. This will remove and destroy once for all the set of baseless and irrational doctrines which hold the masses in absolute slavery and retard their intellectual growth. Do away with the untenable system of mythical sophistry. Elevate morals on the basis of rational teach-

ings guided solely by empirical truths, and you will serve humanity rightly."

"Master," said Yonan, entering the parlor, "refreshments are served in the dining room."

Half an hour later, the little company of thinkers left Count Morat's hospitable home, carrying with them many thoughts of vital interest.

CHAPTER VII

MORE MYTHS

It was early in the morning when Dr. Stuart, exhausted, succumbed to sleep. He was so deeply impressed with the sum total of the discussion held at Court Morat's residence that when he reached the rectory, instead of retiring for the night, he entered his study, threw himself in his chair and began musing.

Reviewing all that had been said during the evening, he found himself facing a mass of problems which, although more than once subjected to his careful scrutiny, now appeared in a light that was entirely new to him, and a host of thoughts crowded his already tired brain, demanding immediate attention. The first and most important question that he had to ask of himself was, why was it that while his conception of utility was duly praised, his application of it in connection with the practices of his church was strongly condemned? Was this just? Was it logical? Did not the end in the case justify the means? What was it that constituted the strength of the argument against his views, which he considered irrefutable? Was it not the so-called empirical knowledge that was made the main issue of the argument directed against the stand he took? However, does this empirical knowledge actually possess a merit as potent and exclusive as was claimed for it? What is knowledge? Is there a knowledge which is empirical and another which is not?

Then he began to analyze the knowledge in his possession. As he progressed in the classification of all that he could call knowledge, he was strongly impressed with the discovery that it had two different origins. One kind of knowledge was based upon faith and the other upon experience.

"Was the first as legitimate as the second? If so, why does one class of men insist upon the exclusiveness and superior merits of the former, and the other upon that of the latter? In other words, why do modern thinkers emphatically assert that knowledge, properly speaking, can be acquired only by experience, and that no information whatsoever can legitimately be called knowledge if it is not derived from this very source, while we theologians claim that true knowledge is that which comes from God? Comes from God! Oh, what an obscure sentence that is! Can any man obtain anything which is not due to his personal efforts and the powers of his understanding? Is there anything divine in this? Is this not human?

"To deny that the knowledge acquired by experience is the only guide and regulator of all human activities would be mere folly, for all of our deeds, in the smallest details, being governed by it, attest it. This unquestionably establishes the fact that empirical knowledge is a standard recognized by all men, whether cultured or savage, and stands on its own merit. Science in all of its numerous branches is based upon it. A chemist learns certain facts acquired by experiences accumulated in the long past, and guided by this knowledge, makes such use of it, as the given occasion requires. A physicist learns of the laws and properties of matter and the forces acting upon it. He becomes familiar

with the laws of gravitation, heat, light, magnetism, electricity, and utilizes them to his advantage. A geologist, a biologist, follow the same method in their respective branches, and on the basis of acquired experiences they build new theories deducted from the observations they make. All of this is empirical knowledge. Such knowledge as this is accepted unconditionally by all logically thinking men, simply because it is exact in its presentation.

“Now let us see how the knowledge which we theologians claim comes from God can be established. Theology asserts that all knowledge, including that of scientists, comes from God. All is created by God, therefore all comes from Him. This is the maxim. However, considering that the knowledge advocated by men of science does not harmonize with our religious teachings, should we be guided by the strictest rules of logic, we must deny divine origin to all exact sciences inasmuch as they contradict the teachings of revelations. That they do flatly contradict the sacred doctrines of our faith is evident from the fact that while our religion teaches that this world of ours was created by God,—that is to say, that each and every element and object whatsoever found on or about this globe came into existence by a distinct and purposive command of His and in the very forms and shapes in which they appear today, or to be more exact, the way they appeared when God created them some six or seven thousand years ago, a state which, strictly speaking, differs very little from the present one, the latest scientific teachings urgently proclaim that a statement like this is incompatible with irrefutable facts firmly supported by the scientific data which clearly show that the earth we

claim was created by God only a few thousand years ago, was in existence many million years before, and under continually changing exterior appearances and entirely different from what it is today. What is more important, while we piously explore the great and glorious act of creation, science emphatically asserts that there was no such thing as an act of creation. Nothing came into existence by a sudden command, they say. Here we recall the old Writ, which says: 'And God said, Let there be light; and there was light.' And again: 'And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass . . . the fruit tree . . . and it was so.' To this science responds, saying that all we see and observe today came into existence not by the command of anyone, but as an inevitable result of the process of evolution, which governs all and which has been in operation on this globe during the at least one hundred million years of its existence, and that the source from which we learn of the time and mode of creation—the Bible—having been originated only a few thousand years ago, could not relate occurrences of many million years before and that, owing to this fact, our doctrines in connection with the creation are utterly ridiculous and radically inadmissible. This they claim to know empirically. From this it is evident that the knowledge advocated by men of science cannot be qualified as coming from God for the simple reason that it contradicts the teachings of our mother church, the only possessor of the knowledge which comes from God. God cannot contradict Himself, nor can He impart two sets of teachings contradicting each other. Hence it is clear that God has nothing to do with the knowledge imparted by men of science. This being the case, we have to look for a

specific source of knowledge which comes from God, and this eminently specific source unquestionably is the Bible, the book of revelations. Thus saith the church. However, what if the Bible is simply a mythology of the Jews, similar to that of the Greeks and the Romans, as modern philosophers claim to be the case? The Babylonians and the Assyrians had theirs. Egyptian mythology was superseded by that of Mahometans, now in full force. What makes us think that the Jews were exempt from the stupendous law governing the intellectual growth of other nations? Can knowledge derived from such a source as this have any value when applied to life? Can the information contained in the Bible be called knowledge? Can any information at all which is not a direct result of experience and cannot stand the test of verification be called knowledge?

“The discussion in regard to the existence of a hell offers a splendid illustration of the complications that arise from this chaos of thoughts. But, oh, dear, dear, how piteously ridiculous the whole matter appears to me! One insists upon knowing, and the other tells him he does not need to know. All he has to do is to believe that there is a hell. But, lo, the searcher for knowledge does not wish to believe. He wants to know the existence of hell the way he knows other things. In other words, he wishes to know it empirically. This is denied to him, and the result is that he does not believe in hell. However, when we come to the stand we take in the matter, the question arises,—can we dismiss the idea of hell at all? Can we do it without endangering, without shaking to the core, the solidity of the whole structure of our dogmatic creed? No, indeed. We cannot discard the idea of hell any more than we can

reject that of heaven. Why so? Simply because, strictly speaking, heaven and hell constitute the sole foundation of our religion. Should we reject them, we would have to reject the whole of our creed. Heaven and hell represent the only power that can efficiently enforce our religion. We are bound to have them. We cannot afford to lose them. We cannot imagine the justice of God without them. We cannot conceive His mercy and paternal solicitude without having a heaven. We cannot think of good and evil without having a heaven for the reward of the first and a hell for the punishment of the second. We cannot advocate rectitude, nor can we condemn dishonesty and crime, without pointing out the hereafter, regulated by the promises of heaven and eternal tortures of hell. Should we dismiss the idea of heaven, what incentive can we offer for the exercise of good? Should we reject hell, by what means, by virtue of what persuasion, can we check evil? Teach the people plain honesty, said the Count. But what is plain honesty? Is it an honesty without an incentive? If so, by what method is this to be carried on? Is it practicable at all? In order to teach plain honesty, without bugbears and myths, as he expressed it, people must be able to comprehend the value of honesty for honesty's sake, a task difficult for the masses as well as for those of advanced intellectuality. Besides, *honesty does not pay* is the cry of the day. Men living a life of iniquity enjoy the full benefit of worldly prosperity while the honest and law-abiding often suffer and perish with no redress whatsoever. A shrewd but dishonest politician, a crafty financier-promoter whose god is the mighty dollar, do not disdain to choose means, regardless of their nature, whereby they can get

rich, nor do they hesitate to take advantage of the credulity of their fellow men in order to despoil them of their possessions. The greater the crimes committed, the louder their claim to fame as a benefactor of mankind. Confronted with these facts of everyday occurrence we are asked,—how can the justice of God suffer the appalling misdoings of such men? How can He permit the existence of such human vultures on the face of the earth? To this we reply that all does not end in this life, and here it is that heaven and hell assume their respective rôles. Those enjoying the fruit of their iniquity in this life will suffer in the next their merited punishment in hell, we say, and the honest will share the beatitude of heaven. Thus, should we reject the heaven and the hell whereby justice is done, are we not despoiling God of His prerogatives and men of their dues? This shows clearly that our conception, or to be more exact, the conception of God and His justice originated by the Jews and adopted by us, necessarily requires the existence of a heaven and a hell. If we are wrong in believing in them, surely we must be wrong in our conception of God and his attributes. To do away with hell, we must first rectify our mistakes in the conceptions we have of God. But, after all, what if heaven and hell are as real—the church teaches they are—as the hunting grounds of Indians, the River Styx, and the Tartar of the Greeks? What certainty have we that these places really exist? There is no certainty. It is a matter of faith, which means that we have to accept these teachings simply because the Bible says so. And why do we have to accept the Bible? Because our ancestors did so. What is worse, if we do not accept it, we are bound to be subjected to

the derision of our contemporaries and in addition be condemned to the eternal tortures of hell, whether we believe in it or not. Oh, what a distressing picture."

These were the thoughts that absorbed Dr. Stuart's whole being in the silent night hours. The spirit of old, temporarily dormant, was awakened in him. Once more he found himself enwrapped and carried away by a multitude of thoughts which disturbed him greatly. In vain he sought relief in repeated appeals to the reasoning powers at his command; he exhausted every resource for maintaining his peace of mind only to find his most strenuous efforts to that end worthless. Then he thought of Count Morat's stand in the discussion, and his counsel stood vividly before him. "*Teach the people plain honesty,*" he repeated again and again. "The philosophy that teaches such a wholesome principle as this is most welcome, surely. But what is to be the basis of such a doctrine? In the absence of proper incentives, what will actuate an honest act, or any act at all? If honesty can be taught without myths—should we suffer the Bible to be designated by that name—what more desirable than teachings able to accomplish such a miracle as this? After all, are we not after the good? What does it matter what cause actuates it? Yes, indeed, a miracle and a marvellous one too, for it is well nigh impossible to imagine any man doing anything without a motive. However, why advance opinions? Why not investigate first the system which offers such alluring premises?"

A few days after, by special appointment, Dr. Stuart found himself secluded with Count Morat at the latter's residence.

"More than once I have wanted an opportunity for a confidential talk with you, my dear Count," began the divine, taking his seat in the offered armchair facing his host, "but after the last discussion we had here, this became imperative. The views advanced by you have aroused in me an uncontrollable desire to know more fully the system of philosophy upon which they rest. The simplicity with which they are invested impresses me deeply, for it indicates the steadfastness and bold firmness of the doctrines from which they are derived. However, before we go any farther on this subject, I wish to ask you a few questions. If I am not mistaken, the sum total of your argument was that we were wrong in propagating doctrines we knew not empirically. While I agree with you as to the merit of the principle you advocate, I utterly fail to explain the attitude you take towards the utility derived from the doctrines in question. You spoke highly of the principle of utility. In fact you pointed it out as the only basis of all moral principles. Should we follow this view, which is your own, are we not bound to recognize the standing Christian teachings have acquired during the past nineteen centuries? Yet you ignore this fact unqualifiedly. I am bringing up this matter for further discussion solely to hear a fuller explanation of the views advanced by you. If utility such as advocated by you has anything to do with the existing order of things, the teachings we propagate certainly have demonstrated their value as such. This you will not deny. Whether the teachings in question are of supernatural or purely human origin does not alter the situation. They exist today, deeply rooted in the hearts of the masses. In my opinion the simple

fact that they exist is sufficient to show that they are necessary, and, as such, they constitute an element of utility legitimately deserving recognition. This being the case, the question arises—what makes you think that the merit of utility in this case is less valuable than in cases where teachings are based on empirical truths? Is utility to be measured by the causes which actuate it or by the effect it produces?"

"By both, most assuredly. However, before I undertake to answer the questions propounded by you, my dear doctor," said Count Morat thoughtfully, "I must call your attention to the fact that in a discussion of this kind, where vital questions are involved, we must have a clear understanding of the terms we use and the meaning we intend to convey by them. In the first place I observe that we widely differ in the conceptions we have of utility. It is the method we employ for the formation of our conceptions of things that we have to consider. That you have such an exalted opinion of the utility derived from your religious teachings is only natural to you, simply because the observations you make in that particular field in which you are engaged tend to confirm you in your opinion. While this is only proper to a man of your position, should you investigate the subject closely, you will readily discover that the stand you have taken is not as solid as you think it to be. In order to illustrate this, let me take you for the moment to the epoch when paganism in Europe was in a flourishing state. Knowing well that the subject I am to bring to your attention is not entirely foreign to you, I intend to be brief and to the point.

"A legion of gods and goddesses worshipped by the

nations, savage and civilized, who inhabited the European continent, constituted a source of consolation and much blessing to the masses as well as to those standing at the head of a given country. Omitting the semi-civilized and those in a state of full savagery scattered throughout that land and known under various names, you will agree with me that the pagan Greeks and the pagan Romans were highly civilized people—in fact such was the standard of their civilization that in many branches of their culture we still imitate them to this day; and this is only natural when you consider, that no cultured man of today can refuse to admire their epoch-making poets, beginning with old Homer, Pindar, Anacreon, Theocritus, Virgil, and Horace. Nor can he ignore the excellence of the illustrious historians such as Herodotus, deservedly named the father of history, and those who followed him, like Thucydides and Xenophon—the Athenians, and Livy and Tacitus—the Romans. Those who know their far famed orators, among whom we may mention only a few like Demosthenes, Æschines and Cicero, certainly value the charm and splendor of the rhetorical riches originated and cultivated by them. The philosophers whose most valuable researches in the realm of reason and didactic maxims are as alive today as in the days of yore,—are they not immortals like Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, Socrates, Aristippus and Xenocrates, not to mention others? While the dramaturgists,—such as Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Aristophanes deservedly command the admiration and praise of readers of the antiquities, who of the mathematicians of today can ignore the eminence of the labors of Archimedes and Euclid? Finally, what shall I say of the array of

famous painters and sculptors of the age in question, among whom Apollodorus the Athenian,—who might justly be designated the father of the art of painting, for it was he who first invented the mixing of colors and the softening of shadows,—Apelles, Zeuxis, his friend Agatharchus, Phidias, Praxiteles, are only fair specimens? And what of those immortals of the golden age of Pericles who gave us the magnificently stupendous and imposing architecture surpassing in elegance, symmetry, and classic form all that we know even today?

“I mention these few among the many illustrious names that led the pagan Greeks and Romans to culture, civilization, and fame, simply to bring to your attention the fact that the epoch of paganism which gave the world men of such distinction and merit was a powerful factor in producing a system of ethics which was as progressive as it was useful, and this paganism was a religion. It was a religion of far greater duration than any religion now professed in Europe or America. In fact so long was the period of its existence that no man of today can attempt to trace its origin, lost in the mist of prehistoric times. It had all the requisites of a religion. It came into existence by the same process which gave birth to and affected the growth of all other religions. It grew from the crudest conceptions to its highest plane of utility. It had its gods to adore and gods to fear. It had its code of morals, too, which embodied a set of ethical principles for the edification and guidance of men.

“That this code of ethics, as well as the Olympian gods themselves—a creation entirely and purely human—was necessary to the then living race was only natural

for the simple reason that they had not yet outgrown that particular stage of mentality which required such a creed. When we consider that, like anything else, a religion representing a set of beliefs is only an effect produced by a certain cause, and follow the chain of the gradual growth of the human race in search of that cause, we are bound to recognize the fact that all religious creeds, whether of the past or of the present, owe their origin to the one and all-absorbing sense of security which had its conception in the helplessness of primitive man. Mystified and everlastingly molested by the inclemency of surrounding elements, the nature of which he knew not, hampered by his utter ignorance of ways and means to protect himself, and exposed to constant struggles and hardships in his rudimentary everyday needs, man, at the dawn of his days, sought his much needed security in regions other than those accessible to him. Owing to this fact, as fanciful as the mythical gods were, there was an imperative reason for their existence. Created by uncertainty, and fear of the unknown on one hand, and the reflections emanating from admiration for men and things superior on the other, these gods became the inevitable product of a great necessity. A superior being, possessing strength and wisdom coupled with the power of dispensing all imaginable good, particularly such good as man needed most, could not but look complacently upon those who admired and praised him. Those of the infernal regions could surely be propitiated by the pleasing offerings made to them by a helpless set of creatures such as the populace considered themselves to be. This was the substance of the general expectancy of mortals. Thus security assured by the protective care of the

gods became a much desired object, which was dreamed of and diligently sought everywhere. Hence the gods of heaven, earth, and water, of whom men expected such protection as would shield them from destructive furies, originated from these sources. Those of the fields, forests and gardens, who provided the daily necessities in plenty; those of house and domestic life, who bestowed peace and contentment; those of time, of the arts, trades, and sciences, of love and joy, of health, of war and peace, of fate, justice, and retribution, and finally those of the lower or infernal regions—these gods, each and every one of them, upon the supplication of men were expected to bestow and grant such ægis, inspiration and help as lay in their respective provinces, help which was to insure the much desired safety and comfort to men.

“As clear and comprehensive as this is to us, had anyone said this of the origin of gods to those who made the reign of Marcus Aurelius glorious and that of Caligula and Nero tragic, would not they have been scandalized by the impiety and vulgarity of such views? Certainly they would, just as you would be had anyone cast similar reflections upon your creed. Yet to us nothing is clearer than this statement, which gives a faithful picture of the workings of the great law of causality.

“When we consider that neither these gods nor the conceptions from which they emanated came into existence suddenly, and that it took ages and ages to develop and construct this in many ways imposing structure of paganism, which, after all, was but the inevitable outcome of the natural exigencies of the then existing race, it becomes clear that the influence exercised

by it upon those professing that faith was as powerful and final as it was old. It passed traditionally from generation to generation with such additional strength and power as the progressive elements of the time could contribute to it. Owing to this, should we undertake to enter into the details of the daily life of those nations, we would readily detect that all their activities, whether private or public, were moulded and regulated by the principles deduced from the teachings we call mythologies. In this they were instructed by a well organized priesthood, who exercised upon them as great an influence, if not greater, than that exercised by the Christian clergy of today. It is highly instructive, nay marvellous, to picture the deep devotion of the pagans and the unlimited faith they had in their gods, of which we read in the records of the chronicles of the time. These gods were made of marble and wood, as Christian statuary and images are made today. Pagans knew well that their gods were made of perishable materials and by the hands of mortals, and yet they believed with as much certainty in the protection they expected from them as any pious Christian of today believes in his God.

“From time immemorial, and particularly in the day of the militant supremacy of the Romans, it was of daily occurrence that a warrior—whether he be a simple soldier, a centurion, a general, a consul, or even a Cæsar—before he undertook an expedition of his calling, prompted by the sense of security and the desire for success, made rich offerings to the tutelar god of his profession who he thought would protect him in moments of danger and bestow upon him the much cov-

eted victory. A desolate and heart-broken wife shed warm tears before the marble statue of the goddess of her household she most admired, imploring the safe return of the husband she loved and the father of her children from the arena of bloodshed and murder. A ruler, a poet, a peasant, an artisan, a nobleman, a student, a man of science and letters, a beggar, a sterile wife, a childless husband,—all of these, and the rest of the populace, in hours of distress and adversity piously and devotedly fell prostrate beneath the pedestal of the fabulously costly altars erected to their respective hand-made deities, humbly yet assiduously imploring for such consolation and help as they needed most. How momentous occasions like this must have been to the pious supplicants you, being a religiously educated man, will understand better than I can tell you. Suffice to say that in proportion to the faith which animated them, they seldom left the sanctuaries of their ancestral cult without carrying with them that consoling gratification which gods only could bestow and which gave them peace, contentment, and hope for the realization of their wishes.

“It is not my object to explore this or any other particular phase of pagan life. By quoting cursorily these few instances, I wish to refresh your memory on the subject and call your attention to the fact that, no matter how you proceed, you are forced to admit that the paganism which stimulated and moulded all that was produced during its existence was an institution of immense utility, by which not only nations of the past, but those of our day as well are substantially benefited inasmuch as it laid a lasting foundation for

the most of the exact sciences which constitute the basis of our civilization, thus extending its utility to our time.

"In your eloquent argument on the utility of your creed, which seems to be the only stronghold of your defense, you attempted to convey the idea that the salvation of the nations of today entirely depends upon the practices imposed by your church. In fact, should the people of the two western continents which constitute the bulwark of Christianity fail to believe in the doctrines propounded by you and follow the regulations laid down by your church, they would be swallowed up by a plague of unheard-of human wickedness. This is more or less the substance of the argument. However, to show the untenability and total fallacy of such an assertion, permit me to submit for your consideration that particular merit of paganism which was derived from it as a religion and which represents the issue of our discussion. You will agree with me that the fervent and abundant display of the wonderful piety, devotion, and unlimited faith of the pagans in their numerous gods could not have been, and decidedly was not, without a strong incentive. Should you look carefully into this particular phasis, guided by an unbiased judgment, you are bound to conclude with me that there was an incentive, and a powerful one, and that incentive was the moral benefit they derived from their religious practices. This certainly shows that paganism was a religion as beneficial to the people of the past as Christianity is supposed to be to those of today. This being the case, we are logically forced to conclude that the merit ascribed by you to the practices of Christianity is neither superior nor

more necessary than that which was derived from paganism. Furthermore, should we be inclined to measure the value of utility by the duration of causes which actuated such utility, we are forced to conclude that paganism having existed for a far longer period of time than Christianity has, forcibly demonstrates that its utility is of a merit far superior to that derived from the teachings of Christianity, which, owing to the untenability of its doctrines on the one hand and the intellectual growth of the race on the other, is hopelessly losing ground so rapidly that at the expiration of the twentieth century of its existence it is doubtful whether there will be anything left of its grandeur to commemorate fittingly its past glories.

"Turn your attention to the events which are taking place just now in old Europe, the stronghold of the oldest and the best organized Christian church, and mark the progress of its decline and imminent fall. Exactly forty years ago the temporal power of papacy had full sway. France, arch-Catholic France, held a stationary army in readiness at Rome to protect and maintain the claims of the Roman pontiff. As a result of humiliating reverses suffered by that country during the war with Germany in 1870, the papacy was left to paddle its own canoe when the last French soldier left Roman soil on August 21st of that year. This was the signal for the series of calamities that followed, which destroyed forever the temporal power of the Holy See. A month later, Italian troops entered Rome, which shortly after was declared the capital of United Italy, and thus ended the temporal power of the successor of Peter the fisherman, a power which, supposedly having been granted by the Roman Emperor

Constantine the Great to the then Roman Bishop Sylvester the First and considerably increased during the papacy of Gregory the Seventh (Hildebrand)—1073-1085—when Countess Matilda of Tuscany, Parma, Modena, and Mantua, granted all her territories to the Holy See, although now and then temporarily suppressed, was exercised by the said Sylvester and his two hundred and twenty-seven successors during almost sixteen hundred years. Hardly three decades elapsed after the above mentioned events when arch-Catholic France, hitherto the valiant protector and main supporter of the supremacy of the Roman pontiff and his temporal power, rebelled and unceremoniously broke the famous concordat of Napoleonic stamp, and after a comparatively short struggle with opposing elements effected the epoch-making separation of the church and the state, reducing the power of the Roman Curia to nil. Today, just forty years after the suppression of temporal power of the Holy Father, following the example set by her charming neighbor, the many times arch-Catholic Spain, gallant and chivalrous Spain, has inaugurated her anti-clerical policy in unmistakable terms. According to this pace, before the expiration of another four decades it is only reasonable to expect that all of Europe will witness the entire suppression of the hitherto powerful influence of the oldest and the best organized Christian church, and the rest will follow, which will be only a repetition of what took place during the dying days of paganism.

“However, returning to our subject, I wish to add that the fact that paganism as a religion was of great utility to those who professed it, is not the only thing that we have to consider. The priesthood of that reli-

gion preached the same thing you are preaching today. They spoke loudly and convincingly of the absolute necessity of their religion for the safety and welfare of their people. They insisted that the only power which could and would save them from all sorts of calamities which would necessarily follow should they suffer laxity in the observance of the ancestral cult, was the religion they professed. In fact, so strong was their belief in the enunciated view that at different times and places they caused the enactment of civil laws, by virtue of which men refusing to believe in the doctrines propagated by them were punished by imprisonment, banishment, and oftentimes by death. The immortal Greek sage, Socrates, whose memory is venerated today by all lovers of honesty and rectitude, and who was subjected to such an ignominious death, is an ever vivid example of these preventive measures for the preservation of the integrity of paganism. He was accused of having corrupted his disciples of tender age by teaching them doctrines contrary to the tenets of their religion, and was forced to terminate his most useful life by drinking a cup of poison. Yet this did not save paganism from perdition.

"Singularly enough, similar crimes, prompted by the very same motives were perpetrated by the Christian church during the Middle Ages of our era. Giordano Bruno, a distinguished Italian, mathematician and philosopher, in his early days a Dominican monk, after seven years of imprisonment, degrading trial, and excommunication, was condemned to death and burned alive at the stake in the Campo dei Fiori, at Rome, February 17th, 1600, for having enunciated views contrary to the teachings of his church. Girolamo Savo-

narola, another Italian Dominican monk and reformer, for a similar offence met the same fate, being burned in Florence May 20th, 1498. John Huss, a native of Bohemia, another religious reformer whose views did not meet the approval of the authorities at Rome, was burned at Constance July 6th, 1415. What shall we say of the labors of the most Holy Inquisition, by the orders of which, in Spain alone, under the supervision and management of the then famous Dominican priest, Thomas de Torquemada,—1483-'98—eight thousand people were burned alive, and ninety thousand punished with the confiscation of their possessions, followed by the severest ecclesiastical censures, simply because they refused to profess the Catholic faith. Yet these and innumerable other burnings, murderings, poisonings, banishments, and imprisonments for life, which took place all over Europe for the express purpose of defending the purity of the Holy Apostolic faith and glorifying the name of the all-merciful God (who, although all-merciful according to the interpretation of the church, had no mercy for these wretched individuals who were subjected to persecution) did not save the integrity of the Roman Catholic Church. Protestantism came in due time and achieved its purpose, which was as destructive to Catholicism as primitive Christianity was to paganism. Protestantism in its turn, having found itself the hero of the hour, determined to carry on a self-imposed mission—which, by the way, was only the natural outcome of the attitude it took in matters religious—to mercilessly destroy the ugly jaws of the Apocalyptic monster beast, whose name, composed of deeply mysterious numbers consisting of *six hundred threescore and six*, according to

the wisdom and omniscient erudition of the followers of Martin Luther, was only a surname of the Roman pontiff. But, lo, somehow or other, they have not succeeded in this particular mission as yet. The Roman pontiff is still alive, and considering the times, he is doing well. He delivers his allocutions and writes his bulls, encyclics, and apostolical briefs as regularly as occasion requires. While matters stand as they do, one thing is certain, that in assuming the rôle of the former, Protestantism built the structure of its own existence on a foundation which promises a faster disintegration of the latest novelties in Christendom than of any religious organization in the past. And this is also natural, for mental evolution must do its work.

"To finish the picture, let me add that while the Protestants undertook the reformation of the old mother church, singularly enough they followed only too frequently in the bloodstained footsteps of the church they wished to reform. The great Protestant reformer, John Calvin, bitterly complained of the atrocities committed by the Inquisition of the Roman Catholic church; and yet it was he, the reformer Calvin, the illustrious founder of Presbyterianism, who burned alive the talented Spanish physician Miguel Servet, October 27th, 1553, in Geneva, because the latter rejected the dogma of Trinity. The massacre of St. Bartholomew, the barbarous persecution of the Huguenots in France, bloody heretic-hunts in Italy, civil war in England, and the Thirty Years' War in Germany, were the horrifying consequences of the reformation. Yet all of this did not save the integrity of the then existing Protestantism.

"However, to conclude, let me remind you once more,

my dear doctor, that the utility which you attribute to the teachings of your church is not as overwhelmingly meritorious as to make it of absolute necessity to mankind. Paganism could not have existed the way it did, had it not been for the fact that it was supremely beneficial to the race."

"What impresses me the most, my dear Count," remarked Dr. Stuart, "is that portion of your argument which conveys the idea that the existence of a thing, whether it be in the abstract or the concrete, is actuated by necessity, and as such, while operative, it becomes an element of utility. In my estimation, this maxim which you illustrated so well contains a great truth. However, when we come to the main point of our discussion, I must say that while I agree with you that paganism has played its part in its widespread utility, I must call your attention to the fact that what was of use to the pagans is of no value whatever to us. The usefulness of paganism cannot be compared with that of Christianity, if only for the reason that the former belongs to the long forgotten past, while the latter is still alive in the hearts of men today. Besides, owing to the character of its teachings, the usefulness of paganism was naturally limited to a period of time, and when that time passed its usefulness ceased, and paganism had to perish forever, as it did."

"So is the utility derived from the teachings you propagate. It has already served the major part of its destiny, and the time is rapidly approaching when it must cease to exist, just as paganism did," answered Count Morat calmly. "In pointing out the utility derived from paganism as a religion, it was not my intention to suggest that what was useful in the past

can be so at present. This would be to admit retrogression, which decidedly does not exist on the schedule of the laws governing us. We must constantly bear in mind this irrefutable fact that there is no retrogression, meaning going backward or backward development, in nature. To expect that the people of today could be made happy with the happiness of the men of the past would be as much a folly as to expect that the happiness of those of today can make happy generations to come. It is the all powerful and ever present law of progression that regulates this, and progression means continuous and successive changes of scene on the stage of human life. Thus you see I am in full accord with you, for I am only corroborating what you said. It is your logic, my dear doctor, that is incredibly defective in this instance, for apparently you forget that by enunciating these views you are flatly contradicting yourself and striking a death blow at the structure of your creed. If, as you say, the utility derived from paganism has no value whatever for you, simply because it belongs to the long forgotten past, how can you assert that the utility derived from the teachings of old time Jews can be of any use to the race of today? Yet the whole merit of your doctrines consists in making men of today believe that they can be made happy with the happiness of the Jewish nation of many thousand years ago. Do you consider this logical? The Jews were happy with the teachings of their ancestors; so were the Greek and the Roman pagans. However, if in your estimation, owing to the mental evolution of the race, the teachings of the latter have suffered a decisive depreciation, what makes you think that those of the Jews are exempt from this

ruling? Furthermore, you overlook another important fact, namely, that if there is anything in the antiquities which is most valuable to the race of today, it is that which comes from pagans. As I said before, all of the exact sciences which constitute the basis of our civilization are built upon the foundations laid by the pagans. Were it not for the splendid achievements of the pagans, we would be in a state of savagery equal to that of the Central Africans. While the wise and thoughtful pagans gave us all we possess in the realm of empirical knowledge, which is the only and safest ground for our further progression, the Jews left us a set of stultifying myths which have no other value than that which benefits its promoters alone.

“What I wished to state in my argument was the simple fact that what the pagan religion was to the inhabitants of Europe and America in the distant past, the Christian religion is to those of today. In other words, the latter, as a result of the mental evolution of the race, has taken the place of the former, and in time to come is bound to be subjected to the same fate which wiped out of existence the old paganism. While Christianity is a step forward in the scale of evolution, it is in no way exempt from the rulings which govern all religious creeds and which will be as operative in the future as they have been in the past. It exists to-day solely to meet the requirements of the mental growth of those men who are still in the bondage of fear and uncertainty, and, forced by the limitations that govern them, are seeking the desired security in regions unknown and inaccessible to them, just as did primitive man and those who followed him. A close observation corroborates this forcefully. The greater

the mental development of an individual of today, the less inclined we find him to believe in any set of religious doctrines. The greater his versatility, the stronger his adherence to empirical truths. And, *vice versa*, the smaller the intellectual horizon of a man, the greater the necessity for him to be guided by a set of views which he neither can nor desires to understand.

"However, it is very impressive to note that while the doctrines of the pagans as a whole had all the characteristics common to all religious creeds, owing to the tendencies peculiar to the pantheistic teachings it propagated, the pagan religion was comparatively free from those harmful qualities, or rather, to be more exact I should have said, harmful defects, which the Christian teachings possess."

"What?" exclaimed Dr. Stuart, greatly astonished. "Harmful defects, you say? You certainly surprise me by this novel accusation, Count, for I know of nothing harmful in the Christian teachings. Will you tell me what they are?"

"The untenable and irrational absolutism you attach to its doctrines, contrary to reason and the laws of nature, which you propagate; the suppression of reasoning, the highest possession of man, you impose upon your followers in matters pertaining to their destiny; and the intentional inaccuracy, which is equivalent to falsehood, in matters scientific and particularly historic you teach, are the fundamental defects of the creed you represent," replied Count Morat complacently. "You will not deny that the doctrines propagated by you are advanced by your church as a set of absolute truths. All of your dogmas, consisting of statements incompatible with the laws of nature, dis-

ciplinary principles deduced from them, and the rest of your practices, you connect with that something indefinable which you call absolute truth. This absolutism, which you append to each and every article of your faith, by its nature being utterly incomprehensible to all men, with no exception, can be employed only by design, which aims rather to stultify than to instruct the people. Things unnatural, or rather stories relating events contrary to the laws of nature, taken from the ancient narratives of obscure origin which you teach your followers, you call by the mystifying name of miracles, and those miracles you attribute to a combination of designs of someone whom you know not. When confronted with the impossibility of the things you teach, and asked to elucidate the supposed facts you propose for belief, you insist on the suppression of reasoning, claiming that God's works are unfathomable, unmindful of the fact that if unfathomable to your followers, they must be the same to you. Yet, notwithstanding this, by the tenor and force of the doctrines you preach you boldly assert that you know God and His designs pretty well. You persist in teaching that blind submission to the rulings of the church, and an ignorant faith which you call by the refined term of *implicit faith*, are all that is required of individuals in order to secure their salvation. To the query as to what this salvation consists of—or to put it in a more precise form, what you propose to save a man from—the substance of your answer is, from eternal damnation to hell, forgetful of the fact that the offered salvation is as fanciful as the state and place from which one is to be saved.

“In these days of rapid progress and intellectual ad-

vancement, the throwing of the searchlight on the most hidden mysteries of life, if attainable at all, has become an unavoidable necessity. The desire to know things as they are, without the phantasmagoric or kaleidoscopic effect, rationally and in conformity with the laws of nature accessible to our verification, is the ever growing cry of the day, coming as it does from all stations in life. Owing to this, it is only natural that the doctrines preached by you, like all other things, should be subjected to the scrutiny of a microscopic investigation.

"I am not surprised to hear you exclaim that my remark on the harmful defects of your creed is an accusation novel to you. You, being a priest of long standing and splendid achievements in the field of your calling, cannot expect to be told to your face that the doctrines you preach are not only irrational, but that they are eminently harmful. That you do not know these defects does not surprise me. What would surprise me would be had you known them and still continued to preach what you are preaching now. Yet the defects in question are there in such massive form that no casual observer can fail to be strongly impressed by them.

"Knowing well how candid you are in your investigation, I am encouraged in the liberty I am taking in telling you equally candidly and dispassionately not my personal views, for these are valuable only to me, but those suggested and formulated by the observations of all honest and logically thinking men, being firmly convinced that the opinions thus advanced will not constitute an offence either to you personally nor to others who believe the way you do.

"Omitting, however, a mass of incoherent and puerile notions contained in the old Jewish book, which you honor by the appellation of *the Word of God*, and which actually is nothing more than a stupendous monument of an equally stupendous mass of absurdities of the old Jews, and the fact that were it not for the set of conceptions laid down in that book there would be no Christianity, I will submit for your consideration only a few of those doctrines which constitute the immediate basis of your creed.

"To begin with, the mysterious birth of a child from a virgin who knew not man, decidedly provokes a cynical smile on the cold faces of men of today. Why so? Why is it, that men, ever ready and willing to accept all truths, no matter from what source they come, are incredulous in this particular matter? A little reflection leads us to the conclusion that this occurs for the simple reason that they cannot suppress and ignore the convictions they have acquired on the matter from experimental knowledge. Every man and woman, whether civilized or savage, knows that no woman ever can conceive a child without having cohabited with a man. There is no philosophy in this, nor do we need the corroborative argument of a biologist to support it. It is a simple fact, a cold and unalterable fact, governed and regulated by the stable laws of nature, which comes under the observation of all men. When we consider that the child in question is a perfect human being with all the attributes of mankind, who in order to sustain life eats and drinks, who is subject to fatigue, rest, and sleep, and who in his manhood experiences all the emotions proper to man, who loves and is loved, who is moved by compassion and rejoiced

by virtue, in brief, who is a man of flesh and blood, and has a pure and loving mother, the assumption that he must have a father of the same kind of flesh and blood is only natural. Owing to this, men devoted to research and the establishment of all truths are forced to speculate as to the paternity of a child born in this miraculous fashion. It is this reason which leads one of the eminent scientists of today to say:

“To return to the particular question of the impregnation of the Virgin Mary by the Holy Ghost, we are referred to the Gospels for testimony to the fact. The only two evangelists who speak of it, Matthew and Luke, relate in harmony that the Jewish maiden Mary was betrothed to the carpenter Joseph, but became pregnant without his cooperation, and, indeed, “by the Holy Ghost.” As we have already related, the four canonical Gospels which are regarded as the only genuine ones by the Christian church, and adopted as the foundation of faith, were deliberately chosen from a much larger number of gospels, the details of which contradict each other sometimes just as freely as the assertions of the four. The fathers of the church enumerate from forty to fifty of these spurious or apocryphal gospels; some of them are written both in Greek and Latin—for instance, the gospel of James, of Thomas, of Nicodemus, and so forth. The details which these apocryphal gospels give of the life of Christ, especially with regard to his birth and childhood, have just as much (or, on the whole, just as little) claim to historical validity as the four canonical Gospels.

“Now we find in one of these documents an historical statement, confirmed, moreover, in the *Sepher Toldoth Jeschua*, which probably furnishes the simple and natural solution of the “world-riddle” of the supernatural conception and birth of Christ. The author curtly gives us in one

sentence the remarkable statement which contains this solution: "Josephus Pandera, the Roman officer of a Calabrian legion which was in Judea, seduced Miriam of Bethlehem, and was the father of Jesus." Other details given about Miriam (the Hebrew name for Mary) are far from being to the credit of the "Queen of Heaven." *

"This statement quoted from the erudite German, well known for his exhaustive scientific researches, unquestionably sounds very harsh, nay offensive and sacrilegious to one who looks upon this subject from the religious viewpoint but not so to the man who, guided by experimental knowledge, wishes to solve a human problem by the laws involved in it. The story of the Roman officer may not be true; if true, it may be in relation to some other Miriam, a name quite common amongst the Jews, but the fact, supported by the laws of nature, remains firm in this—that *the son of man must have a father that is a man*, and this embodies as great a truth as the other fact, that *there can be no son where there is no mother*.

"However, as irrational and inconsistent as this Christian dogma is, when we enter into the spirit of the times when it was originated, we find that there was a reason for such a belief, for certainly this idea was not invented for the sole purpose of being applied to this particular case. The belief in supernatural conception and birth existed many centuries before the Christian era. There were numerous gods in the ancient mythologies whose mothers were ordinary mortals, and whose fathers were of celestial regions. Nay, in the history of paganism, we note quite often the fact that

* Ernst Haeckel, "The Riddle," page 327.

whenever a king's or a potentate's unwedded daughter, or some other maid of high rank, gave birth to a child, the paternity in such cases, for obvious reasons, was invariably ascribed either to some god or at least to a demi-god. What is more impressive, the special endowments of mind and body of these 'children of love' served as a proof of the belief; and this was only natural to their way of thinking, for was it not true that all unusually bright qualities, either mental or physical, could come only from the gods? Furthermore, it was a well known practice of the pagans for sterile wives to go to certain temples to be impregnated by the chosen god, and in most cases their wishes were fulfilled. Thus the distinguished 'sons of gods' of this kind were held in high esteem in antiquity. For the rest, those who are familiar with the beautiful mythology of pagans know that these 'sons and daughters,' of the Greek and Roman gods, often approach nearest to the highest ideal of humanity. Recollect the large legitimate family, and the still more numerous illegitimate offspring of Zeus.

"If we go back a little farther, long before the poetry of the Olympian age flourished, we find this idea in the full nakedness of its crudity in the practices of Egypt. The Egyptians, notwithstanding their high civilization, looked upon animals as incarnations or representatives of their gods. The bull represented the god who created life; the cow, the goddess of conception and birth; the hawk and the cat, gods of light or of the sun; the scarabæus, Ptah; the vulture, Nut and Isis; a sort of ibis known to naturalists as *Ibis Æthiopica*, Thoth; and the crocodile, Seb. Their priests recognized the incarnated gods among these ani-

mals by various signs, and introduced them into the temples. Thus, the holiest of the chosen animals was the bull in the temple of Ptah at Memphis. *He was the famous Apis, born of a cow, which conceived him by a spark from heaven, or by a moonbeam.*

"Such were the conceptions of men many thousand years ago. Between the belief in the supernatural conception and birth of a bull and that of a man, there is only one short step, and this step, already made and forgotten, indicates more forcefully than anything else the progress effected in the mental evolution of the race. People who believed in the deity of the Apis just mentioned, were as honest and earnest as those who believed in that of Zeus and those of today who believe in the divinity of the Son of Man. When the Egyptian creed postulating the deification of animals was in full force, its votaries invested as much certainty and absolutism in the articles of their faith as that which we find preached in our day.

"However, returning to our subject, I must observe that this fundamental dogma of your creed, my dear doctor, leads us to other dogmas of similar origin and construction. There comes the Resurrection, the Ascension, the Transfiguration, the Assumption and a mass of other similar articles of faith. Strange to say, at the mention of these dogmas, for the moment I feel transplanted within the heavy walls of the ancient city of Jerusalem. Allow me, then, to relate to you one of the reminiscences of my visit to the Holy Land.

"On the east side of the city of Jerusalem there rises a hill not of very high altitude, known under the name of Mt. Olive. On the top of this hill, more or less in

the center of it, stands a simple round building of small dimensions, built of stone. Entering this little edifice, the visitor finds in the center of it a piece of raised white rock, which stands above the level of the smoothly finished stone floor and on which there is an imprint of a foot,—if my memory does not fail me, of the right foot of an adult. The imprint is very smooth, and represents in very accurate form the sole of a human foot. On the occasion of my visit to that shrine, I was accompanied by an old friend of mine, a geologist of repute, of Salzburg, Austria, by the name of August Hendel, my man Yonan, and a guide who happened to be a polyglot Levantine of Catholic faith, and who spoke French fluently. It was the scientist this time that was inquisitive, and the following conversation took place between him and the guide.

“What is the significance of this footprint?” said my companion, pointing to the rock in question. ‘Judging from its remarkable accuracy of form, it must have been carved by a good sculptor.’

“‘Nothing of the kind, nothing of the kind,’ repeated the guide, vigorously shaking his head. ‘This was not made by any sculptor or any other man. It is the footprint of our Saviour,* who stood on this spot during the last moments of his stay on this earth, just before his ascension to heaven, and he left this footprint of his own divine foot to remind us of his second coming to this earth of ours.’

“‘What for?’ inquired the geologist.

* Similar belief existed in the days of Herodotus (484-420, B. C.) who, while speaking of the Scythians, and their country, in his book IV, 82, says: “They—Scythians—show the print of the foot of Hercules upon a rock; it resembles the footstep of a man, is two cubits in length, near the river Tyras.”

"'To judge the dead and the living,' was the answer.

"'And where is this to take place?' again inquired the scientist.

"'Yon in the valley.'

"'You mean between here and the city?'

"'Yes, this is the valley of Jehoshaphat, where the last judgment has to take place.'

"'But, my friend,' protested my companion, 'the area of this place is too small to hold the whole of the human race. There are over fourteen hundred million people living today. Should you add to that the number of those dead and those who will be born between now and the judgment day, it will be impossible to place them all here in a place which can hold at the most a couple of hundred thousand, or if jammed properly perhaps a maximum of a million.'

"'Nothing impossible to the Almighty,' answered the guide coldly.

"'But what is the purpose of the judgment you are speaking of; will you tell me?' inquired Mr. Hendel courteously.

"'To reward the good men by taking them to heaven, and punish the bad ones by thrusting them into the eternal tortures of hell.'

"'But are not the good ones among the dead already in heaven, and the others in hell?' was the next query.

"'Yes, they are in their respective places, most certainly, but their bodies are still here on this earth. After the day of the last judgment, however, they will be there body and soul.'

"'Then according to that, the physical bodies of

those departed will once more be assumed by their former holders; is that it?

"Why, yes. The archangels will sound their trumpets for the purpose, and all dead will be resuscitated to stand the trial. Yes, indeed, this is what our good Lord and Saviour will do, when he comes again. And mind you—' Evidently he was going to describe the whole procedure of the coming event, when Mr. Hendel interrupted him by asking:

"Will you tell me, kind man,' quoth he, 'what the church at the foot of this hill, which we passed on our way coming here, commemorates?'

"Why, that is the Church of the Assumption, where the Blessed Virgin was buried after her death, and whence she was taken away to heaven by the angels,' answered the Levantine.

"How do you know all this?" once more asked my friend.

"What I was saying is not mine. It is the holy teaching of our most holy mother church that I am repeating,' ended the pious guide.

"Yes, indeed, it was the doctrine of the most holy Christian church he was expounding, the very same set you are propagating today. However, after the short review of the basic dogma upon which stands the whole structure of your creed, I deem it superfluous to dissect and analyze the rest of the doctrines, which, far from being representations of the actual events they are purported to relate, are simply the reflections of the views and convictions which existed in the days long before Christianity was born. They were borrowed partly from the Judaic traditions of no reliability whatever and partly from the practices of the pagans.

Any man with a moderate intelligence can see this, should he devote his time to the studies of the conditions prevailing two thousand years ago and extending to the epoch when the Egyptian civilization was in full force. Owing to this fact, the forcing of the opinions of the past upon the men of the present is like the driving of a nail in a block of steel. The harder you strike your hammer, the higher is the jump of the nail out of its socket, and the greater the failure of the undertaking. The race of today cannot be led to blind submission as easily as in the past. You know you cannot make the people of today happy with the happiness of those of the past. Why, then, these miscalculated efforts of yours? Why this false alarm and fictitious stratagem for a salvation you cannot grant?"

"You forget, my dear Count," said Dr. Stuart musingly, "that there are people, and a good many of them, who are perfectly happy with what you call this false alarm and fictitious stratagem of ours. No man knows this better than I, for Sunday after Sunday I see the happy, radiant faces of such comfortably seated in the front pews of my church. They know nothing of the burning flames consuming rare souls who wish to be honest before all with their own consciences. They are happy with the articles of their faith, simply because these are stamped with that very absolutism which you point out as a non-understandable thing. They neither can nor care to think. This absolutism saves them that trouble for it leaves no place for thinking. Should you ask any man or woman of my congregation whether he or she understands the meaning of the term 'absolute truth,' the answer will come instantly, and with an emphasis that leaves no room what-

ever for doubt, that they do. I see you smile, Count, but this is true. It is the church that has educated them so well. This splendid education, which quietly passes from father to son, satisfies them, gives them comfort and solace which they can obtain from no other sources. The outward appearance of such an inner state in most cases is well marked and quite accessible to the observation of any interested investigator. You can see it if you will. However, should you fathom this happiness I am describing, you will readily detect that it is not the veracity nor the absolutism of the dogmas professed that is the cause of it. It is simply a habit, a pious, well-intentioned habit of doing what their fathers did. Furthermore, among Protestant churches ours is the most fashionable. People have their small prides and still smaller vanities which guide them in their likes and dislikes. There are many in my congregation who are exceedingly proud of the fact that they are members of our church. The beautiful edifice and the exquisite furnishings in it; the magnificent organ, under the management of an accomplished musician; the well trained choir of mixed voices with their renowned repertoire; add to these a zealous and active rector;—do you think all of these count for nothing? These things attract and give satisfaction to some. There are others who have other motives. There are merchants, physicians, and lawyers who wish it to be seen and remembered that they are members of our church. At my request no one of them would refuse to take up the basket and go around begging pennies for the church. They have their ends in view and are as happy as the rest of the congregation. Thus you see, in this multitude of causes which

satisfies the shallow vanity of individuals, the importance and validity of my teachings have no place. I said that they are happy with the doctrines we propagate, but, had they the analyzing power you have, I certainly doubt whether they would feel as happy as they do now. But the fact is that they do not possess this power, nor do they know anything of comparative philosophy. So much the better for them. However, when we come to the inner requirements of individuals like myself, the situation is considerably changed.

"Your review, my dear Count, I must confess has impressed me deeply. But, you have not told me yet how you came to the conclusion that the doctrines we preach are harmful. You dealt with that portion of the subject where, according to your opinion, untenability and irrational absolutism play their part; but you did not touch those qualities, or defects, if you please, which counteract its utility. You were perfectly correct when you said that the utility of my church constituted the only stronghold of my defence. I acknowledge that and willingly confess, were it not for the great utility I see in the activity of my church, I would not be so hard a worker in the field as I am. The only power that can displace me is the knowledge that the utility of my creed is miscalculated. I dread the alternative, yet I want to hear the verdict."

"I admire your sincerity, and highly esteem your impartiality in a matter of such a vital interest to you, my dear doctor," said Count Morat, deeply moved. "I must confess there are very few men in your calling who would listen to anything that is not in harmony with their views with such unusual patience and candid interest as you display. This prompts me to conclude

that you understand perfectly well the position I take in the matter. What we are after is the truth, naked, uncolored, unmarred, either by personal views or by the prejudices of whole nations, and such a truth can he only know who is ready and willing to put aside all personal likes and dislikes and be governed only by unbiased and sound judgment.

“However, let us come to our subject. One of the greatest factors which contributes to the growth of the race unquestionably is imparted knowledge. To a man of your calling, for whom all things as they are, and as he sees them, are created by God, this saying certainly does not mean anything. Yet this subject, *growth*, is the highly important problem of human life. Its study opens before us many channels hitherto unknown to the western world, and leads us to a better understanding of the laws which govern the race. In your position as an observer, have you ever wondered why it is that all men are not alike? Nay, what is more remarkable, even children of the same parentage differ from their parents and one from the other. We observe from the conduct of adults as well as that of children the fact that one is more developed intellectually than another. With a little training, one masters the situation readily and becomes a power, while the other, with all his instruction and most careful drilling and schooling, remains stupid. Why so? There must be a cause that regulates this. Certainly there is, and this cause is individual growth. To enter into a lengthy discussion on this eminently important and fascinating subject in order to show its unsuspected value and the detailed process by which this growth is attained, will take a great deal of our time and de-

tract our attention from our immediate subject; and as I am in haste to answer your question, I am forced to postpone this to another occasion. However, to remove the unnecessary confusion which may follow in our further reflections, let me give you the simplest description of the process I can formulate, which will enable you to see the growth I am speaking of in its proper place. I have to start from what we call life. That we are living, all men know. But how many of them have a concise idea of the meaning of life? Very few, indeed. Here is the process in question. **TO LIVE IS TO EXPERIENCE. TO EXPERIENCE IS TO LEARN. TO LEARN IS TO GROW, AND GROWTH IS THE ONLY OBJECT AND SOLE AIM OF OUR EXISTENCE.** From this the logical deduction follows: We cannot reach our goal without growth. We cannot grow without knowledge. We cannot learn without experience, and finally, we cannot experience without activity, which constitutes life. Now then, having made my premises passably clear, we can proceed safely. As I said before, one of the greatest factors in the growth of the race is imparted knowledge. Should you analyze this subject critically, you are bound to detect that the growth of an individual is effected, first, by the personal experiences it acquires, and second, by the imparted knowledge it adopts. These are the two sources which supply all that constitutes the growth of individuals as well as that of the whole community. However, while the first is the most efficacious, owing to the irremediable limitations of individual life it is only partially beneficial. The experiences of a legislator are not those of a farmer. Those of a geologist, physicist, and biologist are foreign to a merchant, an architect, and a

shoemaker, and conversely. Considering that no one man can go through the experiences of all men, and that every man needs to know more than he does at any time, and that there is no time when he does not need to know more, we are forced to conclude that the personal experiences of one individual do not represent a sufficient quantum for the attainment of his growth. In order to overcome this deficiency caused by the limitations of the individual life, we resort to the supplementary factor, which is imparted knowledge. Here the question arises, what shall be the nature of the knowledge imparted in order to be beneficial to the individual? The answer is, as the growth of an individual can be attained only through and by experimental knowledge, the only imparted knowledge that can benefit him is that one which embodies actual, not visionary, experiences of others, accumulated either in the past or present. The next question that naturally suggests itself would be, how shall we know which is actual experience and which is not? The answer is simple, namely, that any imparted knowledge which is capable of verification represents an actual experience. Any which cannot stand this test is visionary, imaginary, and as such absolutely does not deserve credence or consideration. It follows that the only criterion of the validity of imparted knowledge is constituted by its capability of verification. A skilled botanist of to-day confidently relies upon the science of botany, a science formulated long before he was born. Why so? Simply because the principles set forth in that science are verifiable by him at any time. Owing to this, he does not need to go through the experiences of those men who compiled the science of botany. He appro-

priates their views readily, and reaches his goal with marked success. In brief, in order to be beneficial to the race, imparted knowledge must necessarily represent the sum total of such experiences as are verifiable. This is suggested by the fact that if imparted knowledge represents a truth, it must be verifiable. If it is not verifiable, it cannot be true. Is this sufficiently clear, doctor?"

"Perfectly clear," answered the divine. "However, what you say is applicable only to the natural sciences. You do not mean to say that besides these, there is nothing that can be beneficial to man, do you?"

"That is exactly what I mean," resumed Count Morat. "Should you follow the meaning of the word *beneficial* you are using, you must conclude with me that only the natural sciences, which we call by the general term of exact sciences, confer benefits, are useful, profitable, helpful, advantageous, serviceable, and contribute largely to the valuable end which is the growth of the race. They are beneficial simply because they represent nothing but the results of experiences of men devoted to researches of the laws of nature. They teach us to know our surroundings, to avoid the dangerous, and profit by the useful. Besides, there is no science which is not natural, for the simple reason that whatever is not natural is not a science. The word supernatural, which you use quite frequently, and which was originally coined to designate things inaccessible to our physical senses, is a misnomer. If natural means things and operating laws belonging to the visible universe, all things and laws which exist, whether visible or invisible, whether known or unknowable to us, are natural. There is nothing *super*, which means

above or beyond nature. All there is, is natural. The words *supernatural* and *preternatural* were originated by the fact that there are things which we know, and these we call natural, simply because we know them; and again there are things which we do not know, and the less mysterious among these we call *preternatural*; while those entirely passing all our understanding we name *supernatural*. These terms simply indicate our limitations and nothing more. However, we are not dealing now with the things we do not know. Our immediate discussion is of the things we know by experience, and on the validity of the knowledge of knowables, which constitutes the only and the most valuable factor in our growth. Kindly observe that what I am saying is not a theory. It is a fact, which, while fully observable, remains unexplored by most men. You will agree with me that all we know, individually or collectively, comes from experience. Had we not known what we do know, we would be classed among the savages. As it is, we are superior to primitive man owing to our growth which is actuated solely by the experimental knowledge we possess and not by any visionary dogmas. This being the case, it is evident that any set of views, doctrines, and dogmas whatsoever, which are not derived from experimental knowledge, are not only utterly useless, but decidedly harmful inasmuch as they mislead and interfere with the natural process of the growth of the race. It follows that any man or any institution whatsoever, no matter how old, how well organized, and how long established, which promotes, propagates, and teaches such doctrines commits an unpardonable injustice towards mankind, and this is exactly what you are doing, my dear doctor. Instead

of accelerating, as you think you are, you are retarding the progress of the race. You say it was not you who invented the dogmas you are preaching. So much the worse. In order to promote a set of irrational and senseless dogmas, not your own, and which cannot be supported by any laws of nature, you intentionally and expressly insist upon the suppression of reasoning. By doing this you are mercilessly despoiling man of his most precious possession, his reasoning faculties, and this, in my estimation, is a far greater crime than robbing him of all his worldly riches."

"It would be, indeed, had such a deed been committed, but as far as I know this is not the case," remarked Dr. Stuart convincingly. "You accuse me of a crime I never could perpetrate. How can I despoil any man of something he does not possess? I am afraid, my dear Count, you are availing yourself of poetical license when you speak of the possession which appears to you so precious. I have been dealing with that man now for many a year, and so far I have not found in him the valuable treasure you mention. The fact is, as I said before, that he has no reasoning power."

"You are speaking now of your man, and you are perfectly correct when you say that he has no reasoning power. But do you know why?" inquired the Count.

"I am curious to know why," answered the divine wistfully.

"Simply because you destroyed it in the bud, while its owner attended your Sunday school," replied Count Morat calmly. "It was then that the unpardonable act of despoliation was committed. It was then that your man lost what nature gave him freely. After telling

him in a most interesting, nay, fascinating way, the scandalous stories of your Abrahams, Isaacs, and Jacobs, the number of their wives and concubines, you laid the foundation for your future work. Through your repeated efforts, you indelibly impressed his young mind with the conviction that he was a wretched little sinner, who badly needed the constant care and maternal solicitude of your church. Time and again you pointed out to him what a miserable thing he would have been had he not had the opportunity to be one of the Lord's sheep. Having confirmed him in the belief that he was a weakling, you taught him in a consoling way to hope that he would not be numbered among the lost. Yes, indeed, after he received instructions from you, he would be saved. He would make a good man, nay, a splendid man, when he reached maturity, provided he would attend church regularly, pay his pew rent, contribute to the Sunday collection. And the rest?—God, the all merciful God, who is particularly attentive to the needs of his Sunday school children, would do the rest. He would give him enough of health and wealth to make him happy.

“In order to acquaint him with the mysteries of the universe, you taught him how once upon a time, about five or six thousand years ago, the Jewish God created this planet of ours in six days, and on the seventh rested. In order that he might retain these teachings, you promised him a joy ride and the delights of a picnic if he would memorize the following passage: ‘Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made.’

"When he had repeated the scriptural dictum faithfully, you nodded approvingly, being quite sure that he would not ask you about what became of the omnipotence of God if He had to work so hard in order to create this little earth of ours as to feel tired and in need of a rest after He had accomplished His stately work. Nor could you expect him to say that the barbarous language in the sentence quoted sounds more like a nursery tale of the cave man than a statement conveying a truth. Then you told him the wonderful story of the creation of the first man and the still more wonderful myth of the creation of the first woman. To teach him his filial duties, you told him how a chosen man of God, by the name of Noah, was drunk and lay naked, and how one of his sons covered the nudity of his parent,—this to illustrate the duties of a good son. Then you told him about the unmovability of the earth, and how Joshua made the sun stand still, and how Moses, the lawgiver of the Jews, the mouth-piece of God, and at the same time an assassin, performed miracles in Egypt and elsewhere, and thousands of other wonderful and miraculous things he could not understand.

"To complete his education, you told him of the future life. You described to him as vividly as you could a heaven full of winged angels and a hell full of horned devils, and in order to impress his young mind properly you exhibited for his inspection a set of engravings of the artistic conceptions of Doré, the man who illustrated the poems of Dante Degli Alighieri, entitled 'Paradise' and 'The Inferno,' and who, by the way, in company with the illustrious poet, seems to have been well acquainted with those places. The train-

ing of the little one would have been quite incomplete, indeed, had you not instructed him in the mysteries of the divine qualities of his holy mother church—her only lawful possessor of absolute truths—her tender maternal care for the needy, and the loyalty and submission to her dictates expected of him. All of these stories you unhesitatingly pointed out to your ever docile pupil as absolute and undeniable truths, against which there was no appeal. After such a thorough training of your man, how can anyone expect him to have any judgment of his own? Certainly he has none. He reasons most assuredly, but he does his reasoning according to the pattern of your make, suggested and deeply imprinted upon his young mind while you were training him.

“It is here, my dear doctor, it is here, in your Sunday school, that the harm is done. Your efforts in the pulpit would be ineffective were it not for the foundation laid in the hearts of the little ones. Whether knowingly or unknowingly, by the nature and method of your teachings you silence his initiative for the acquirement of knowledge by experience and observation. You enslave and manacle all his senses to blind submission to a set of views as savage as it is antique, an element that is mercilessly destructive to his growth. Not satisfied with the suppression of his natural tendencies, you cultivate in him, with a skill worthy of a better cause, an unreconcilable antagonism to all that is not in harmony with your doctrines. Is it any wonder that he looks upon the tenets of the exact sciences with repugnant hostility?

“These doctrines of yours, my dear doctor, as I said before, are not only incompatible with the laws

of nature, but exceedingly dangerous inasmuch as they are misleading. The man who implicitly believes in them, cannot reasonably believe in the teachings of the exact sciences. In comparing the tenets of the two, he necessarily must find himself facing a complicated dilemma difficult to solve. Should he conscientiously adhere to the teachings imparted by you, he must refuse to follow those of science. Should he find the sciences more necessary in his daily life, and wish to be logical, he must refuse to believe in what you teach. Should he choose to follow both, one on Sundays and the other on week days, as some men do, he would have to suppress and silence the sense of honesty and justice in himself and practice a debasing hypocrisy. However, there is a pretty little tale that nature tells which eventually may teach him a great lesson. If he believes that the butterfly was created by God, he will never know the real truth in the matter, namely, that were it not for the caterpillar there would be no butterfly.

"There is one more salient stain that disfigures the whitewashed tunic of the practices of your church, and that is the intentional falsification of the history of nations.

"On the occasion of one of my visits to your study I saw on your desk a book entitled, 'Was St. Peter ever in Rome?' The learned author of that book, whom we both know, and who represents Protestant views and beliefs, and particularly those advanced by the Anglican church, undertakes to show that St. Peter was never in Rome,—nay, he could not have been there—and tells why. To support this view, he manages to present a series of historical events in such fashion

that there is no room for doubt as to the veracity of his assertion. As you know, the sole object of this work is to prove the untenability of the claims of the Roman pontiffs as the lawful successors of the head of apostles by showing that St. Peter never was in that city, as it is claimed by the Catholics, and consequently he could not have been the founder of the papacy. While the author of this book thus uncere- moniously points out the interpolations committed by the Catholics, the historians of the Roman Church, by far stronger arguments, prove that St. Peter actually was in Rome and that it could not have been otherwise, for he was commissioned by his Master to establish the Apostolic See in that city, which he did before he died on the cross. That these views are strongly adhered to by the respective churches, no one will dispute, for it is to their interest to do so. Now the question naturally arises, which of the contending parties is right and which wrong. If the historical facts presented by the Anglican church in behalf of the contention in question are correct, those advanced by the Catholics certainly must be falsified. On the contrary, if Catholics are telling the truth, the Protestants surely must be telling a falsehood. One thing, however, is certain—both cannot be right. No matter how you solve the problem, the cold fact will remain that the Christian church, in order to support its ancient claims, deliberately and intentionally falsifies history.

“Another instance of a similar nature we find in the following fact: the Church of England insists and emphatically asserts that the body of her Episcopate—the collective body of bishops—is fully invested with the apostolic succession. When this matter was sub-

mitted for an opinion to Leo XIII a few years before he died, the pontiff solemnly declared that there was no apostolic succession in the Church of England after the days of Henry the Eighth. As a result of this controversy, numerous eminent writers, representing both churches, introduced to the public very elaborate documents purporting to be historical, each proving conclusively and convincingly by all the rules and regulations of logic and irrefutable historic data that his church was right and the other was wrong. Instances like this are too numerous to be quoted here. Suffice to say that intentional inaccuracy and interpolation in matters historic is one of the oldest practices of the Christian church. These means are used not only to establish the claims to which the church aspires, but also to support and maintain the structure of its doctrines by virtue of events purported to be historical and of miraculous origin. Recollect the supposed apparition of the cross in the skies appearing to Constantine the Great during one of his marches against Maxentius, reported by his biographer, Eusebius (265-340) the learned Bishop of Cæsarea and the father of the church history, which pictures vividly the method by which the Christian mythology is made up at the expense of history.

“What shall I say of the ever militant opposition of the whole Christian church to the latest scientific discoveries of vital import to the whole race? If the doctrines of the church have standing by virtue of the verity they represent, why should the propagators of such doctrines be alarmed at the result of scientific researches?

“To conclude, let me once more remind you, my dear

doctor, that the only imparted knowledge which actually can and does benefit the race is the set of acquired experiences embodied in the exact sciences. Nothing but exact sciences can insure the welfare and happiness of mankind.

"From this review you can easily see now that the utility derived from the institution you represent is as fictitious as the method by and through which it becomes operative is false, and this is not the utility that benefits the race. The principle which constitutes the basis of the highest ethics is the utility which extends its beneficial coöperation into the realm of causes. Such a principle is not measured by the necessities, whether imaginary or real, of a single individual, nor by those of isolated nations. It aims to meet the necessities of all people and all times, no matter what part of the globe they inhabit and what the color of their skin. Furthermore, it carries its effectiveness into all ages, often extending its beneficial offices into worlds as yet unknown to us. Such being the law which governs the race, you can imagine the ridiculousness of the claims of a set of men who, by the help of a polished mythical sophistry, pretend to possess the secret key to a happiness they do not know."

"Pardon me for interrupting you," said Dr. Stuart, readjusting himself in his chair. "You frequently use the expression 'mythical sophistry'. Will you tell me what suggests the term?"

"Nothing but the character of the teachings," answered the Count. "You may agree with me or not, but the fact will remain uncontested that the whole structure of what is known under the name of theology is based on myths. Any discourse which deals with

myths we can legitimately name sophistry, which simply means a fallacious reasoning. It is fallacious because it deals with myths. Myths as non-existing entities are equivalent to naught, and a dissertation on nothing, no matter how beautiful its construction, how strong its reasoning, and how refined its rhetoric, will result in nothing only. Theology, as the word implies, has for its particular object, telling us of the existence, character, and attributes of God, His laws and government. Now should you consider the matter with unbiased judgment, after a thorough examination of the subject you are bound to conclude with me that theology knows nothing of God and His attributes empirically. If we wish to build our views on a solid foundation, we must deal with facts only and no fancies. Myths are fancies, hence reasoning on that ground is not the element that will make us grow, and much less can it insure happiness to the race. No, my dear doctor, we cannot build our castles on mythical sophistry any longer, for some of us have already outgrown that stage, and others are awakening to its real meaning. Owing to this, the age of myths is rapidly approaching its end. The convulsions of its last agonies are plainly noticeable everywhere, and its days are numbered. Give the people what they need most. Give them solid knowledge of nature and its laws. Give them the exact sciences, nothing but the exact sciences, and you will build a lasting monument to your commendable efforts."

"My dear Count," said Dr. Stuart contemplatively, "you are perfectly justified in advocating a solid knowledge of the exact sciences. But evidently you forget that as solid as these sciences are, they do not, nor

can they regulate the moral conduct of men. They are helpful in many ways, but to guide men in the choice of their daily deeds something more is needed than that."

"It is evident, my dear doctor, that you are not familiar with the subject," answered Count Morat. "What are these exact sciences if not a pure and simple exposition of the workings of the all-pervading law of cause and effect? A certain cause produces a given effect. The ascertaining and minute exploration of the multifarious manifestations of this effect, whether the causes of it are known or not, is called science. Remove the causes and there will be no effect; and where there is no effect observable, there is no science. Now, if this law regulates manifestations of all things that we know, what makes you think that the man and his activities are exempt from it?"

"That may be so, but experience teaches us that for a man to act in this or any other way, there must be some incentive for his act," remarked the divine.

"There is, a strong and very inviting one, too," answered the Count; "that incentive, as I said before, is utility. A good deed produces a good effect, and this is useful to the operator. Evil produces bad results and these are harmful to the man whose choosing becomes the cause of it."

"Well," said Dr. Stuart with resignation, "I must confess I am nonplussed. You are leading me now into a region of thought entirely unknown to me. However, let me say this, that while your views are not in harmony with mine, they convey truths which command a careful and mature consideration before they are to be rejected. It never occurred to me to see the activ-

ity of the church in the light presented by you. Whether this was due to my partiality to the labors in which I, personally, am involved, or to ignorance of the aims and scope of a utility of wider conception, is a matter of a new study to me. As it is, the whole problem appears to me in such dazzling light that before I come to a decisive conclusion, in justice to the cause I must know more of the laws which make utility what it is."

At this moment Mr. Milton entered the room and the conversation was interrupted. Shortly after, Dr. Stuart left for his home, deeply absorbed in his thoughts.

CHAPTER VIII

WESTERN SHINTOISM

Entering his study a few days after his conference with Count Morat, Dr. Stuart found on his desk a letter waiting for his perusal, from his bosom friend, the Reverend M. J. Howard, whom we already know. Seeing the missive which he had been expecting for some time, he hastily opened it and began reading. It was a letter of many carefully written pages, replete with deep sentiment and sagacious thoughts. That the contents of it aroused great interest in him was evident from the continually changing expression of his countenance. Now rigorously serious and critical, now partly perplexed, partly amused, he continued the perusal with ever increasing animation. Some passages of it he read more than once. Now and then he raised his classically moulded head, gazing with fixed eyes into the void of his study, evidently giving way to his own reflections in connection with what he was reading, and, finally, when he finished, he took his pen and wrote the following:

“Absorbed by a mass of intricate reflections fresh in my mind, your letter, dear Howard, at this moment is most welcome. I feel I want to talk to someone who can understand me. I want to discuss, analyze, and reason, if only to ascertain that I am not under the spell of a delusion. Your letter gives me this opportunity, for I find in it the very reflections which more

than once have assailed me in the past, and which now have engaged your full attention.

"Can you imagine the direful and distressing sensation of a shipwreck victim, who, after the collapse and final destruction of his ship, having succeeded in making himself secure on the only available piece of board floating on the disturbed surface of the deeps of the ocean, discovers that the board in question, which constitutes his only hope, being shattered by the infuriated waves, can no longer give him the security sought? The despair of such a victim, I should say, is a very feeble reflection of the feeling which is associated with the consciousness of one's helplessness to save the cherished legacy which is most precious of all, faith in the sacredness of ancestral cult. Yes, ancestral cult, for after all, what is our religion if not that? We scoff at and deride the ancient Shintoism of Japan. We wonder how a nation progressive as the Japanese are can be blind to such an extent as not to see the utter shallowness of such a practice. Yet take the sum total of our practices, and you will discover we are not doing anything different. It is true, we are not deifying our ancestors and worshipping them by bringing them offerings of honey, milk, and choice rice every day in the year, as some of the devotees of Oriental Shintoism do in the little corner of their homes consecrated to the purpose. But instead we are deifying their most primitive and crude conceptions and piously worshipping them. We do not offer them edibles, but we make them far greater sacrifices in burning on our altars to their memory all that constitutes our individuality. We silence our reasoning, we suppress our views, we dwarf and trample brutally upon the results of our

own observations, in order to maintain and perpetuate theirs, and this we do at the expense of progress and the intellectual growth of the race. The Shintoism of Orientals does not require of its votaries such sacrifices as these. The living men of Japan may adopt as many new principles of ethics as they see fit. They may suppress the superstition of their forefathers and be eclectic in the choice of their ethics. It will not injure nor diminish the charm of their ancestral cult, simply because this cult dictates no ethical code aside from the practices mentioned. It is different with us. Our ancestral cult consists in the maintenance of a code of ethics originated by the Jews and adopted by our forefathers. We must turn our left when our right cheek is smitten, for such is the ethic of old. We have no superstitions to suppress. All we have, and it all comes from our ancestors, are absolute truths. Oh, what mockery! To say that there was no man who, after being swallowed by a fish, could live three days and as many nights in the stomach of his swallower, would be a heresy, for do we not read in the Holy Bible that Jonah, after such a romantic experience, had converted the naughty inhabitants of Nineveh? To say that the waters of a sea, of any sea, do not obey the orders of any man, would be another heresy, for do we not read in the Holy Bible that 'Moses stretched out his hand over the (Red) sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land and the waters were divided. And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and their left.'

"No, indeed, these are not superstitions. These, and a mass of other similar Judaic rhapsodies are but absolute truths. Thus, while engrossed in our own Shintoism, we assume a dignified and protectorial attitude towards the Orientals, and generously dispatch our men, women, and a lot of bags of money—there is a legion of dilettanti always ready and willing to take care of the bags—across the ocean to the Land of the Rising Sun and that of the Celestials, to convert, as we say with particularly suave unction, those wretched heathen, who, should they be neglected by our magnanimity, must surely perish forever. However, it is curious to know what the heathens in question think of us and particularly of our religion.

"Several months ago, there appeared an article in the press* which only recently came to my notice, and which impressed me deeply, inasmuch as it came from the pen of a prominent minister and profound theologian,—so declares the introductory editorial note. The article in question is entitled, 'Will Japan Become a Christian Nation?'

"Having described how, 'only a few years ago, Japan stood on the threshold of Christianity,' and 'had we been able to approach Japan two decades ago with a Christianity united in its operation,' and 'had we possessed a united religion instead of one hundred and fifty-seven different sorts and kinds of religion—even though our practical morality might not have consistently coincided with much of our theoretical doctrine—' the reverend author of the said article, who has recently been in the Orient making investigations along these lines, proceeds thus:

* *Hampton's Magazine*, December, 1909.

"I was thrown much in contact with a remarkably interesting Japanese man of letters, a graduate of the Imperial University and a post-graduate of one of our leading American colleges. In the course of our conversation I asked him whether, in his judgment, there was a likelihood of Japan becoming, even in any marked degree, a Christian nation. He said:

" "No, not in the sense you mean, and in which the missionaries hope. Japan is the most tolerant nation in the world today, so far as religion is concerned. In a degree to which no nation of modern times has ever approximated we have absolute freedom of belief. No one ever thinks of asking what your religion is, any more than of asking any other entirely personal question.

" "There are many Christians of many kinds in Japan. To what extent they are intelligent, well founded Christians I should hesitate to say. There is much in the doctrine of Occidental Christianity that is extremely difficult for an Oriental to comprehend. I have no doubt that many have given close study to its teachings and are firmly persuaded of its truth. We all know, of course, about Christianity. Its sacred books are a part of current literature and are read by many as a matter of absorbing interest. We all admire its founder as a great and good man, as one of the world's greatest teachers, whose doctrine is in many ways the same as Buddha or Confucius, and therefore worthy of the widest acceptance and obedience.

" "There are many things in the Bible, of course, that we cannot believe, any more than we can accept

the fables and miracles of our own so-called sacred books.

“ ‘We believe in taking good wherever we find it, and so far as the moral precepts of Christianity are concerned we all accept them, and so far we are all Christians. But to make moral acceptability depend upon intellectual assent to what reason pronounces as impossible is superstition. We are throwing away our hereditary superstitions for the clearer guidance of science and intelligent reason.

“ ‘Would you, as a man of intelligence and education, ask me merely to exchange one mass of superstitions for another? Even had I not become conversant with the practical relation between the theology of Christianity and the actual life and morals of the Christian nation, I could not accept it, for I could not believe it.

“ ‘Put yourself in my place. Suppose you were equally intelligent and educated with what you are to-day—capable of logical reasoning and scientific judgment, but absolutely without either hereditary or personal bias—and there were offered to you the Christianity that a dozen missionaries of as many different denominations are preaching in Japan today as absolutely essential for your salvation, would you accept it as rational, as in accord with your scientific sense, as tenable in any way?’ ”

“The author of the article continues:

“ ‘I found that the practical objections of the Japanese to Christianity are many. A Japanese lawyer said to me:

“ ‘If there were nothing else to make impossible my acceptance of the Bible as an inspired book, I should

find an insurmountable difficulty in the historical parts of the Old Testament. The history of the Jews is a tale of war and cruelty and bloodshed almost without an equal in human experience, and yet we are told that God allowed, and often commanded and approved of the most sanguinary conflicts. How could that be, if He is, as you say, a Father, and a God of love? And these same Jews who present the Old Testament as a part of your sacred volume, absolutely refuse to accept or believe the New.”

“The author goes on:

““Why,” said a Japanese newspaper man just returned from a three years’ assignment as London correspondent, “why should we accept your Bible with all its alleged miracles, impossible occurrences, unscientific statements, any more than you should accept ours? And we find that you are not agreed among yourselves. Some of you say it is all inspired and absolutely infallible; others that it is only partially so. Which are we to believe?””

“Yes, indeed, which are they to believe? But, above all, *why* are they to believe? That is the question. The *which* would not be so difficult to point out, had we the *why*. But alas, this *why* still remains unanswered intelligently.

“In the quoted portions of the article mentioned, you will undoubtedly observe two vividly striking features. One is the penetrating lucidity with which the men of Japan view the Bible, and the other the naïvety of the theologian who quotes them. Is the author conscious of the strength of the logical deductions embodied in their remarks? The answer is to be found in the following extract from the same article:

“‘A friend of mine, an Englishman,’ says the reverend author, ‘for years connected with the faculties of Japanese higher schools and colleges, and than whom I know no more competent authority upon the subject of comparative religion, believes that the religious hope of Japan lies in the coöperation of intellectual Christianity and intellectual Buddhism; in the mutual understanding of the two systems; and in the development of a moral code whose basis shall be the common ground of ethics upon which both alike insist, but whose outward form shall be Oriental, and so suited to the people whom it is designed to enlighten and uplift. Be that as it may, both great religions (*sic*) are facing in Japan a common foe in the self-satisfied and destructive agnosticism that bases its absolute denial of the supernatural upon the accepted facts of exact science. It is the voice of that agnosticism, more or less fully developed, that replies to your query, whenever you approach educated Japan as to the future of Christianity, or for that matter, as to the future of Buddhism.’

“From the above extract it is evident that the latest explorer of Japan does not consider the opinions of the Orientals related by him of any value whatever, for they are, as he avers, dictated by self-satisfied and destructive agnosticism, which, however, bases its denial of the supernatural upon the accepted facts of exact science.

“In reading these lines, I find myself facing a puzzle of no small importance, for I ask myself:—what are these accepted facts of exact science which inspire the denial of the supernatural? Are there any facts at all in the possession of exact science to that effect?

What is the science in question? Is not the acquired knowledge of the workings of causes and the effects that follow them, and the ascertained truths of facts, that which we call science? Is not the accumulated and established knowledge systematized and formulated with reference to the discoveries of general truths or the operation of general laws, that we term science? This is, then, exact science, the very foundation of our progress and civilization; for do we not accept it as such? Are we not guided by the intelligence of it in our daily life? Do we not teach it in the educational institutions under our supervision? Can we say with impunity that exact science is erroneous in its basic principles? No, indeed. Should we say this, we would be dispatched to the nearest insane asylum. It follows that exact science is a set of teachings which we cannot reasonably reject; for, should we do this, we should reduce ourselves to the state of primitive man. Now the question arises, what this so-called exact science has to do with the acceptance or rejection of the supernatural? Is it because we feel and know with certainty that exact science is the only power upon which we can safely rely for intelligent guidance in our researches? However, are there any accepted facts of exact science, as the reverend author intimates, upon which one may base his absolute denial of the supernatural? Decidedly there are none. Nay, not only there are no such facts as would justify the quoted assertion, but, on the contrary, science frankly confesses its total ignorance on the subject. Exact science knows positively nothing of the supernatural, and says so. Are we bound to be regulated by the ignorance of science? Certainly not. This being the case, are we

theologians justified in blaming science for not teaching what it knows not, and not admitting what it cannot? No, indeed, there is no justification for the statement of the author in question, who evidently wishes to voice the sentiment of the church. Thus it becomes evident that neither science, nor men guided by its methods, are to be blamed for not accepting the supernatural. Instead we claim that the church knows all about it. It is our duty, then, to show that there is a supernatural. But how are we to approach the subject? Can we reasonably expect men of today to accept a set of views simply because we say so? In order to gain a hearing, are we not bound to appeal to reason? However, the only regulator of our reasoning is that logic which we acquire from the construction of exact science. In other words, the logic by which our reasoning is regulated is formulated by the empirical knowledge which derives its origin from exact science. This being the case, should we approach the subject with such a logic, we certainly are bound to arrive at the very conclusion which scientists present. Should we reject the system in question, we are bound to fail in the presentation of our views in regard to the supernatural. The ground upon which men of science base their reasoning is that realm of elements which is thoroughly accessible to their senses. Such is not the case with the supernatural of our teachings. There is nothing visible nor tangible in the realm of theology. This being the case, how are we to convey the accuracy and correctness of the knowledge we profess having of the supernatural?

“These reflections are suggested by the remarks of

the Japanese men. But the fact is that it is not the Orientals nor our own agnostics that I wish to defend. It is the logic involved in the sayings quoted that I wish to elucidate. Nor is the author in question the only one who employs such tactics. We all, that is to say, the clergy, do that very thing in more or less degree. We must blame somebody or something in order to support our doctrines.

“Had an antagonist of the most sanguinary type wished to assail the church and its doctrines, he could not have written a stronger arraignment than the one quoted by the reverend author. The objections enumerated by the Orientals are not anything new to us. We hear them among ourselves right here, every day, and we must confess our inability to check or suppress the train of the modern method of reasoning which is capturing the best minds of our day. This happens for the simple reason that while the so-called agnostics present their objections with a commanding logic, we are not able to meet them on the same ground. The saying *that to make moral acceptability depend upon intellectual assent to what reason pronounces as impossible is superstition*, is the basis and main foundation of this arraignment. It matters little whether this saying comes from the Orient or Occident. The fact is that no logically thinking man can deny the truths conveyed by it. Should we wish to establish its falsity in order to maintain our views, before we attack a mass of objections presented by men of science—for this is what the agnostics advocate—we must clearly and distinctly show that to make moral acceptability depend upon intellectual assent to what reason pronounces as impossible is not superstition. On the con-

trary, it would be superstition should we refuse our intellectual assent to what reason pronounces as impossible. The only ground upon which we can base this assertion would be, that human reason, being finite and as such naturally defective, cannot and does not constitute an authority to pronounce and define the possible and impossible. What is impossible to the human mind, is not so to the divine will. This sounds well, and what is more important, it embodies strong logic, provided, however, we can substantiate our premises. That we know well the limitations of the human mind needs no argument, for we can demonstrate this by a mass of illustrations taken from life. But do we know as well the infinite powers of the divine will? This is what we have to demonstrate. Man and his limitations are accessible to us. We see and observe this day after day. But is the divinity and its perfections accessible to our senses as well? When we say that the human mind is hampered by limitations, are we not speaking of ourselves as well as others? If so, how can we theologians know and comprehend any more than the men of science do? If the knowledge of the supernatural, such as we possess and teach, appeals to us simply because, as we say, it represents a truth, why does not this very truth, for the very reason that it is a truth, appeal to men who are guided by scientific reasoning? The answer is simple. It is the method by which we acquire our knowledge of the supernatural that is objectionable to the principles of exact science. Our knowledge of the divine will and divine attributes is not empirical. What we claim to know is not knowledge. It is belief, and belief is simply an admission of the authority of somebody's saying so. We cannot

deny the fact that all we know of the supernatural we have learned from the Jewish lore, for have we any other authority for what we know aside from the Bible? Certainly not. We accept unconditionally the sayings of the Jews for truths, and this is how we acquire the knowledge of the supernatural we profess to possess. It is this method that men guided by scientific reasoning refuse to accept, and it is this very method which makes it impossible for us to prove that to make moral acceptability depend upon intellectual assent to what reason pronounces as impossible is not superstition.

“‘If there were nothing else to make impossible my acceptance of the Bible as an inspired book,’ says the Japanese lawyer quoted by the author of the article in question, ‘I would find an insurmountable difficulty in the historical parts of the Old Testament.’

“Now let us see to what extent this saying is justified. Put aside for the moment your theology, and transform yourself into an ordinary mortal who knows nothing of it. Take your Bible, look at the first page where the story of the creation begins, and observe the given chronology. It is marked four thousand and four years B. C., which in plain English means that the act of creation of the earth was begun that number of years before Christ. Add to this the nineteen hundred and ten of our era and you get a total of 5914. According to this, the only source at our disposal acknowledged by the church, this earth of ours has been in existence, from the first day of its creation to our day, only 5914 years. This is what we as Christians must believe and teach our followers.

“Let us turn now to the science of geology, the main

object of which is the study of our globe, the causes and methods by which its structure, features, changes, and conditions have been produced during its long existence. This science is as exact as any deserving that name. Computations made by geologists are based upon actual observations of matters visible and tangible on the earth. The system by which men devoted to this branch of science are guided is as precise and accurate as that constituting the science of mathematics. There is nothing visionary nor imaginary about it. Deductions made from researches are facts accessible to the verification of anyone interested. In order not to deviate from the point in view, I will quote only such data as will answer the purpose. A map of geological ages and periods gives the following account:

- I. Archeozoic Age (primordial). Age of invertebrates.
52 million years. Sedimentary strata 63,000 ft. thick.
- II. Paleozoic Age (primary). Age of fishes.
34 million years. Sedimentary strata 41,200 ft. thick.
- III. Mesozoic Age (secondary). Age of reptiles.
11 million years. Sedimentary strata 12,200 ft. thick.
- IV. Cenozoic Age (tertiary). Age of mammals.
3 million years. Sedimentary strata 3,600 ft. thick.
- V. Anthropozoic Age (quaternary). Age of man.
300,000 years. Sedimentary strata little thickness.

"According to this table, the periods of duration of

the five distinct ages enumerated give us the exact number of one hundred million years.

"In order to obtain a clearer idea of the vast duration of these evolutionary periods and to appreciate the relative shortness of the so-called 'historic period,' Dr. H. Schmidt, of Jena, has reduced the one hundred million years to a day. In this scheme the twenty-four hours of 'Creation day' are distributed over the five evolutionary periods as follows:

- I. Archeozoic period (52 million years) = 12 h. 30 m.
- II. Paleozoic period (34 million years) = 8 h. 07 m.
- III. Mesozoic period (11 million years) = 2 h. 38 m.
- IV. Cenozoic period (3 million years) = 0.43 m.
- V. Anthropozoic period (0'1-0'2 million years) = 2 m.

"If we put the length of the 'historic period' at 6,000 years, it makes only *five seconds* of 'Creation day.' The Christian era would amount to two seconds. This is what the geologists tell us.

"Now the question might arise, is geology an exact science? Is the computation of one hundred million years correct? What certainty have we that all these learned names of ages and the number of years of their duration are not merely a fantastic display of a sort of erudition of no reliability whatever? Can we admit that the men who style themselves geologists can know more than their Creator? For, was it not the omniscient God himself who inspired the writers of the Bible to say that it was only four thousand and four years before Christ that He began the creation of the earth? This being the case, how can we accept as truth the statements made by these men? In the face of these facts, is it not mere folly to give preference to the say-

ings of men, when God Himself, through his chosen men, says different? This is what an orthodox theologian who bases all his knowledge on the Bible would consistently say. In order to answer these questions I must dismiss geology for the moment and take up the more complex science of astronomy.

"Astronomy is a science which deals with the movements, distribution, and physical characteristics of the heavenly bodies. These heavenly bodies are hundreds and thousands of millions of miles distant from our earth, the nearest celestial wanderer to us, the moon, being 239,000 miles away. Astronomers tell us marvellous things. They give the exact orbit and dimensions of each of the eight planets revolving around our sun. Having exhausted all obtainable information concerning our solar system, they plunge into the immeasurably immense blue of the void which surrounds us, and minutely describe the marvellous movements of other heavenly bodies. They tell us of the constellations, starting with the grandest, the giant Orion, which contains seven brilliant stars, two of which, Betelgeuse and Rigel, are of the first magnitude. Flammarion calls this group the California of the sky, because it not only contains the treasures named, but in the middle of the sword there is found the wonderful nebula. Next to it there is the Little Dog and the Great Dog. Then come the Twins, the Auriga, the Bull, the Great Bear, Hercules, and what not. They tell us the names of the nineteen stars of the first magnitude known to them. Here is Sirius of the Great Dog, they say; there is Arcturus of the Herdsman; and again, here is the Vega of the Lyre, and Capella of the Wagoner. Ah, that charming Capella, the light

of which, piercing through the void at the rate of 75,000 leagues a second, must travel 71 years, 8 months and 24 days in order to reach this planet of ours. Then comes Aldebaran of the Bull, Spica of the Virgin, Regulus of the Lion, and so forth. They have classified the visible stars and qualify them in fifteen different magnitudes. They aver knowing more than a million stars, separately observed, catalogued, and duly registered on celestial charts. They also tell us the wonders of asteroids or planetoids. They picturesquely describe the shooting stars, the so-called fixed stars, the nebulae, the Milky Way, the double and multiple stars, and finally the charming heavenly vagabonds known under the name of comets. No one of the astronomers ever was on any of the planets or stars they describe. Yet they seem to be more familiar with the heavenly galaxy and the great distances which lie between the individual stars than some of us are with the distance which separates the Atlantic from the Pacific. When we marvel about the volume of knowledge imparted by the astronomers and ask them by what means, what mechanical devices, they come into possession of this marvelous knowledge (we cannot suspect them of taking it from the Bible, for the Bible knows nothing of astronomy) they call our attention to the light and say that without the aid of that light, which is that form of luminous energy which comes to the eye in succeeding waves or vibrations at the rate of four hundred and fifty trillions per second, and which travel at the rate of 186,000 miles in a second, they would know absolutely nothing of astronomy. While the mechanical appliances at their disposal are of great service to the cause, light constitutes the main

power which enables them to know things pertaining to the celestial bodies which to us are well nigh incredible. Now the question arises, is the information imparted by the astronomers correct? The answer is to be found in the following:

"In 1682 there appeared in the sky a heavenly tramp, a wonderful comet, which has since become the most famous of all known comets and whose last visit to us was recorded during the year 1910. At about that time (1656-1742) there lived in England an astronomer by the name of Edmund Halley. This illustrious gentleman took particular pains in observing and studying the comet in question, and applying the principles of Sir Isaac Newton, he identified it as the historic comet of 1066, when William the Conqueror landed in England, and also of 1456, after the capture of Constantinople by the Turks. Tracing it back to 12 B. C. and fixing its period at 76 years, he staked his professional reputation that it would return in 1758, in the following memorable lines: 'Wherefore, if it should return according to my prediction in the year 1758, impartial posterity will not refuse to acknowledge that it was discovered by an Englishman.' On Christmas day, 1758, sixteen years after his death, the comet appeared again in conformity with the prediction made by Halley, and was named after its discoverer, who has held since a conspicuous niche in the temple of fame.

"Here is an illustration which teaches a valuable lesson and fully answers our query. I have chosen this particular instance as an object lesson for the simple reason that it enables us to form an opinion as to the accuracy and correctness of the science of astron-

omy without recurring to the mathematics involved in it, of which most of us know absolutely nothing. There is a comet which is visible to us only once in 76 years. After the display of itself and its wonderful luminous long tail over the observable horizon for a comparatively short time, the comet is lost for a period of 76 years in the endless celestial space where no human ingenuity can follow it. Yet its mysterious movements in the unknown regions, its velocity, passing all human understanding, and its traceless route are subjected by men of science to rigid scrutiny, and calculation of mathematical precision and certitude. Were it not for the exactness of the system and the correctness of the principles employed by science, how could anyone know anything at all about it, and especially how could anyone predict its movements and its appearance to us with such precision and exactness as is recorded by facts known to all men? Now if the science of astronomy, complicated as it is, can accomplish such a wonderful task in acquiring precise knowledge of the seemingly immeasurable distances of the void through which a given comet traverses, how much more precise must be the science which deals with the earth where things, visible and tangible as they are, are fully accessible to the methods employed by it?

“Geologists may be mistaken in their calculation of one hundred million years as the period of the earth’s existence. But even should we reduce that number of years to only one million, nay even to only one hundred thousand, still the difference between what science teaches and that which the Bible asserts remains enormous.

“It is this fact, it is this stupendous fact. and a

mass of other similar facts that force men adhering to scientific views, whom we designate as agnostics, to say that to make moral acceptability depend upon intellectual assent to what reason pronounces as impossible is superstition. The reason which assumes such a commanding attitude in the minds of intellectually advanced men of today, and which dictates the above statement, is not a whimsical caprice of self-satisfied individuals, as the author in question would have it should we consider serious his allusion to the actuating motives detected by him in self-satisfied and destructive agnosticism. But this is not the case. Men who formulate by the help of scientific methods their opinions about the things subjected to their reasoning cannot be blamed. They are as rational in their judgment (if not more) as we claim to be. That they refuse to accept all and every doctrine not based on scientific grounds is only an unavoidable result of sane judgment. Which is the more reasonable, to remain in the limits of accessible facts and say so, or to plunge into the unknown and speculate upon the unknowable? We accept the science of geology and teach it in our schools, yet we do not wish to acknowledge the correctness of its calculations simply because it contradicts the Bible. Is it any wonder that men of science refuse to accept the Bible because it contradicts the verified exactness of science?

"The Holy Bible is replete with narratives and incidents not in conformity with the laws governing them. The mysterious, the marvelous, and the impossible, which make up that time honored book, is what the advanced men of today refuse to believe in.

“‘Aspiring to be gods, if angels fell,
Aspiring to be angels, men rebel,’

sang the immortal poet. These two lines convey a great truth, greater, indeed, than a casual reader may suspect.

“Should we, by some ingenious device advocated by the adherents to Judaic traditions, succeed in reconciling ourselves to the complications arising from the conflict in matters historical, we are still facing a problem of great import in the Japanese lawyer’s remarks quoted above. ‘The history of the Jews,’ continues he, ‘is a tale of war and cruelty and bloodshed almost without an equal in human experience, and yet we are told that God allowed and often commanded and approved of the most sanguinary conflicts. How could that be, if He is, as you say, a Father and a God of love?’

“Yes, indeed, how could it be that a God of love should be the dictator of cruelty and bloodshed? Here is a case which permits of no sophistry. Yet many a theologian of the latest type will readily argue that the Biblical wars and unspeakable cruelties were actuated by God’s sense of justice. But how puerile this is one can see from the fact that no honest man of today would knowingly and willingly be the perpetrator of the deeds attributed to God, whom we believe to be infinite goodness and absolute love. Judging from the prevailing tendencies of our age, which are gaining a firm ground in the hearts of men of today and which peremptorily demand the entire suppression of elements leading to war and bloodshed, we are safe

in asserting that the God who inspires us with such lofty desires is not the one whose picture is drawn by the primitive Jews. Either we have to admit this self-evident truth or say that God is as changeable and fickle as men are.

"The sayings of the men of Japan would not have impressed me as they did, were it not for the fact that they were reported by a theologian. However, while the display of broadmindedness, impartiality, and toleration remain much coveted virtues, they become dangerous to the theologian who places Christianity on the same level with Buddhism. 'Both great religions,' meaning Christianity and Buddhism, 'are facing in Japan a common foe,' complains the reverend author. Then Buddhism, in the opinion of the Christian theologian, is as good and as great as the Christian religion is. If that be the case, what becomes of the great and absolute truths which the theologians claim their creed represents? If such truths are absolute, does it not follow that the teachings of the Buddhists or any other religion not in harmony with our own are not true? If they are, then the truths which the theologians preach are not absolute. This being the case, how can any theologian blame men guided by scientific reasoning for not accepting them?

"It is a most impressive fact, however, that while the reverend author finds fault with the agnostics of the far East, whether knowingly or unknowingly he points out the defects of his own creed in such glaring colors as to make intelligent readers realize the untenability of Christian doctrines. 'Had we been able to approach Japan . . . with a Christianity united in its operation, agreed in its dogmas, one in

its structure, this story need not have been written,' exclaims the doctor, and he adds: 'Had we possessed a united religion instead of one hundred and fifty-seven different sorts and kinds of religion—even though our practical morality might not have consistently coincided with much of our theoretical doctrine what would have been of far more value, the mind and the heart of Japan might have turned to the lofty and impressive ideals of Christianity.'

"How incredibly unconscious is the author of the defects of the logic involved in these sentences, one may observe should he reflect that if their ideals of Christianity are so lofty and impressive, how is it that Christians themselves are not impressed by them? That they are not, the author attests when he says that our practical morality does not consistently coincide with much of our theoretical doctrine. On the other hand, if they are, why is it that they are not united in the operation and structure of the religion professed and, particularly, how is it that they do not agree on the dogmas which they advance as absolute truths revealed by God, and which, according to theologians, constitute the basis of those lofty and impressive ideals?

"While he misses his point in the application he makes, our friend the author vividly reminds us of the structural defects of the Christian church. It is only too true that we are not united. We are incessantly fighting each other. We condemn opinions of others not in harmony with ours relative to dogmas which we claim to be revelations imparted by God. Owing to this, we actually have one hundred and fifty-seven distinct and separate Christian religions, nay, we have as many religions as there are individuals in the Christian

church. We ridicule each other, and there are sectarians who actually hate and despise those Christians who do not profess their creed. This is simply because as the mentality of the race grows richer in experience and empirical knowledge, the old beliefs and practices become impracticable owing to the differences arising from the views forced upon us by the exigencies of our time. Hence the new sectarians enlist in the order of the day, the latest of them claiming the laurels of superiority. This fact alone proves convincingly that the set of dogmatic teachings which we attribute to God is purely human, and this is why it needs to be improved upon, and this is the *why* which makes the divisions in the Christian field so numerous and varied. Then what about our ideals, one might ask. Yes, we have lofty and noble ideals, such as equal rights to all men, suppression of cruelty and corruption, furtherance of rectitude and honesty in all our dealings with all men, brotherly love to all mankind; but these ideals are not exclusively ours. They are taught by non-Christians as well. What is more important, they are charmingly beautiful when engrossed on paper, or perhaps even more so when they are preached from richly carved and costly ornamented pulpits; we boast of having them,—but how few there are among us who live in conformity with the spirit of those ideals we can judge from the enormous number of crimes committed in our midst every day against these very ideals. It is most impressive and thrilling, however, that amongst these, the clergy take the most conspicuous part,—the clergy, who claim to be invested with the divine power to propagate the divine teachings by vivid word and living example. Here I

am led to the contents of your letter, in which you devote much space to this very subject. You seem to be much scandalized and horror-stricken at the apprehension of the misconduct of your fellow clergymen in your section of the country. A prominent rector commits suicide by hanging himself in the cellar of his rectory; another elopes with a girl of sixteen, a daughter of one of his parishioners, leaving his wife and several small children destitute. A bishop, presiding at the deliberations of a stately gathering in the city of Boston, while in his chair facing the luminaries of several dioceses present in the hall, writes, on the desk before him, love letters to a married woman, and unfortunately for him, he is detected in the act by an indiscreet and unfriendly priest of his own. A rector spends his church money on the gambling tables; another is shot by an infuriated husband and loses one of his eyes, and while friends of his opponent say that he was guilty of improper relations with the woman in the case, others boldly assert that he was shot at the instigation of the wife simply because he would not enter into such relations with her. In the simplicity of your honest soul, you cry, 'why should these scandals occur?' You seem to be entirely forgetful of the fact that it is not the habit that makes a monk. His Holiness, the Roman pontiff, John the Twelfth, a youth of five-and-twenty, the Vicar of God, and the visible head of the church of Christ at the time (955) when the Roman Catholic Church was the only recognized Christian church, had his pontifical career speedily closed by the sword of an injured husband. These and innumerable other similar incidents which have occurred in the past and continue to occur nearly every

day, indicate forcibly the utter impotency of our doctrines. It is the man himself, his spiritual growth, his so-called born-in-him potency of virtue and rectitude that make his life a reflection of his ideals, and not the vaunted ideals which decorate our hall of fame, that are operative. The reason for this is a subject which has a very extensive sphere of operation. However, of this I will not attempt to speak here. On some future occasion I shall discuss with you this intensely interesting study. What I wish to say in this connection is that our dogmatic teachings are dead letters. They have ceased to be impressive. They are no longer the guiding elements in the whirlpool of human action. The time when one set of church dignitaries devoted serious thought to the discussion as to whether angels had sex or not, and the other set undertook to describe the government of heaven, has passed, never to return. We badly need a regeneration, a reconstruction of our ideals in such a way that their application to daily life, instead of being an imposed duty, may become of necessity an individual task. In order to accomplish this we must necessarily discard our time-honored western Shintoism, free ourselves from the yoke of superstitions of Judaic origin as well as those of our own making, and follow the dictates of those natural laws which constitute the immediate constructive power of our daily life and which are accessible to our senses.

“Having led us to these reflections, and with us those of his readers who can think and discern, the Christian theologian and author concludes his article with this sentence: ‘ . . . if we are willing to take the Golden Rule, spoken alike almost in

the same syllables, by Gautama, by Confucius, and by Jesus . . . we shall continue to send men and money for the evangelization of Japan.'

"What inconsistency of ideas! If Buddha and Confucius have spoken almost in the same syllables as Jesus did, and if the teachings of these two great eastern reformers are already known to the inhabitants of Nippon, as the author asserts, of what use can our evangelization be to them?

"Such is, however, the logic of a modern theologian, and it is unmistakably a fairly good specimen of that logic, or to be correct, the absence of it, with which the average theologian of today is imbued, and which, if anything, emphatically proves that we are not capable of correct reasoning, nor do we possess scientific judgment. Nay, for the love of honesty, we must confess that we are the most illogical set of men on earth. And this is due to the fact that we are in absolute slavery to our hereditary mistakes and not entirely free from personal bias.

"By the time you reach these lines in your perusal of this epistle, I doubt not you will readily understand the reason why I devoted so much time and thought to the article quoted. Had I followed the reflections contained in your letter, I could not have answered the vital questions you propounded more fully. However, while you deplore existing conditions, you, prompted by your earnestness and genuine zeal, unconsciously (and I suppose from force of habit), follow the example of others in using old-fashioned arguments. Such argument as this: you must believe in the doctrines of our creed, if you want to save your soul—in other words, should you refuse to believe in

the supernatural of our teachings, you will be damned to the eternal tortures of hell,—does not work today. It is stupid; it sounds ridiculous, if not idiotic. While such an argument was very effective many hundred years ago, it is not so today. Today intelligent people decidedly do not believe in hell, simply because it is unjust and not in conformity with the laws of nature, and the admission of the existence of such a horrid place, on the ground that the old Jews said so, is perfectly barbarous. And again, when you assume the attitude of a defender of the faith, you fall in line with the rest, using the most untenable argument ever conceived. The argument that we must accept and support the set of doctrines of our creed simply because it is ours and represents the cherished legacy of our ancestors, is equivalent to the Shintoism of Orientals. And yet this is the only factor which insures the stability of our creed. Yes, indeed, the majority of Christian people belong to their respective denominational churches only by virtue of being born of parents who professed that faith. Here and there we find a *rara avis* who, having no parental creed to respect, either changes his views in matters religious, or having none, becomes *converted*, as we say, to some creed. But this rare bird does not make churches. He is simply an individual of no particular merit. At any rate, let us rejoice and be jubilant over the fact that our western Shintoism is as well organized as that of Japan. Nay, more so, for while we are sending our men and money to convert Japan, no man of that country ever dreamed of converting us.

“Your supposition that since your visit to our Golden State, when we met and discussed matters of

great interest to both of us, my views must have assumed a more definite aspect, is correct. As long as I had for my guiding element the utility of the Christian doctrines, I felt secure in my position inasmuch as I firmly believed in the importance and beneficial results derived from it. But, alas! this belief, strong as it was, when confronted with a stronger philosophy than mine, vanished like the morning dew absorbed by the glaring rays of the sun, leaving no trace of its existence. Oh, dear, dear, how we have to labor and learn in order to know and to be able to appreciate the immensity of what we do not know. How little, indeed, oh, how little, an average theologian of our day knows, he only can perceive who does not limit himself within the magical circle of one-sided doctrinaires, whose motives for preaching what they do are too well known to be mentioned here.

"In conclusion, let me say this, that while we cherish the institutions of our fathers, it is our immediate and sacred duty to stand by the truth. A truth which cannot stand on its own merit; a truth which needs the support of an organized body or bodies in order to be effective; a truth which cannot be effective without being invested with a sheepish philosophy, is not mine. Farewell."

CHAPTER IX

CAUSE AND EFFECT

On the picturesque shores of the Pacific, about an hour's ride from the city of Los Angeles, there is a secluded spot known as Shakespeare Beach, located between Playa del Rey and Redondo, two well known seacoast towns in Southern California. At this little resort there are only a limited number of cottages belonging to a select few. One of these, having rather the air of a Swiss chalet, belongs to Count Morat, who usually spends the summer months there. Having installed himself here for the season, Count Morat invited his friend, Dr. Stuart, to spend a few days' vacation with him. Thus, while the divine was enjoying the cordial hospitality of his host, the Count, on a beautiful morning, we find the two congenial friends comfortably seated on the wide porch facing the majestic ocean. For a while both appeared absorbed, each in his own thoughts, for silence was the only reigning element, which now and then was interrupted by the gentle murmurings of the sea. Finally, prompted by the desire to give expression to his musings, Dr. Stuart began to speak.

"How inspiring the ocean is," said he, turning to his host, the Count, "and what a mass of thoughts it suggests. The great variety of lives, the animal, vegetable, and the mineral—the latter according to your views, also possessing life of its own, and with the rest being generously displayed in the depths of this im-

mense volume of water—undoubtedly presents a most fascinating study. However, while ichthyology, or natural history of fishes, never attracted me to any marked degree, the ocean as a whole always remains a subject of great interest to me. How wonderful indeed are the ever active currents which for hundreds and thousands of miles traverse this wide ocean, carrying streams of its voluminous waters, of varied temperature of heat and cold, to the extremities of its shores. Particularly impressive are the tidal movements, which periodically rise and fall as though by magic, twice in every lunar day.”

“Yes, indeed, the wonders of the sea are as numerous and as great as those of the land, if only men could see them all,” remarked Count Morat. “However, it is a most marvelous fact that these ocean tides of which you speak are actuated by an external agency, a heavenly body, a grandchild as it were of our glorious sun, which while at a mean distance is nearly 239,000 miles away from our planet. We owe all to our majestic sun, our heavenly father through whom all life is sustained, but we also owe a great deal to this satellite of a satellite, our charming moon. It is due particularly to its attraction, which in this case is three times greater than that of our sun, that we have the purifying motions of our seas known as tides. Without these daily currents, the great volumes of water would become so stagnant and unhealthful that we could not live on their shores with impunity.”

“By the way,” exclaimed Dr. Stuart, “we are very proud of our sun, whom you are pleased to call *our heavenly father*. Yet there are other suns of greater capacity than ours. They are bigger in size and emit

a larger volume of heat and light. According to the latest discoveries of Smithsonian astronomers, the star Agol, in the Head of Medusa, though only a little larger than ours, gives out sixty-three times as much light as our sun does. Is not this humiliating? However, returning to our satellite, the moon, we must acknowledge that it renders great services to us. It gives us light and health by keeping our seas in sanitary condition. Probably it does other things of which I know nothing. At any rate, this fact suggests a thought, which, although greatly ridiculed by our modern astronomers, I think deserves better consideration,—namely, that if the moon, only a satellite of ours, produces such a beneficial effect upon our planet, is it not logical to conclude that other planets and even distant stars have something to do with us as well?"

"Most assuredly they have a great deal to do with us," answered Count Morat. "That some astronomers ridicule the idea, only indicates that their brains are too small to comprehend the unity of the celestial mechanism. However, they are not the only ones who are guilty of such gross misconduct. Theologians ridicule everything which does not agree with their views."

"*Quorum pars magna fui*," quoted the divine, referring to his former attitude.

"But this does not change the situation," continued Count Morat, ignoring the soliloquy of his interlocutor. "In approaching this subject we are facing a problem of mighty magnitude. It is the question of the unity of the universe that we have to consider. Let me illustrate. There is a huge press-machine of

the latest type which while in motion performs numerous and diversified mechanical functions. It prints in one or many colors with equal facility. It divides the sheets of paper it prints according to the desired pattern. It folds them in perfect shape and delivers ready for distribution. There is a quantity of wheels of all sizes in this machine, which work together in perfect harmony. Now, should the smallest of these wheels break, do you not think the whole machinery would be instantly disabled? Certainly this is what would happen, when the wheel in question is in the chain of wheels which rotate by the force of dependency, and it is most noteworthy that the effect produced by the broken wheel, aside from incapacitating the whole machinery, is as apparent on the whole of the paper it prints as it is on every part and parcel of it reduced to a letter.

"As clumsy and inadequate as this illustration is, it gives an idea of the unity of the heavenly mechanism. The universe of which our globe is but a tiny wheel consists of innumerable wheels in the shape of suns and planets of all dimensions and magnitudes. The collective work of this mechanism can be harmonious, then, only when each and every part of it does its share properly. Owing to this, our solar system does its work as long as other solar systems do theirs. Should any of the myriads of planets and stars cease to perform their motions, no matter in what distant corner of the void it be located, the whole mechanism of the universe would be affected by it. Nay, not only planets and stars, but should even an atom, insignificant as it may appear to be, fail to follow its destiny—a matter utterly unthinkable—the whole universe would go topsy-turvy."



"Perfectly logical," assented Dr. Stuart approvingly.

"Furthermore," resumed the Count, "when we consider that we are only an outcome of the existing order of things, how can we assert that we are not subject to the laws governing all? The idea of separatism in nature can be entertained only by those individuals who are utterly incapable of comprehending the stupendous unity of the universe, which in plain language means that there is nothing—nothing that we know which can exist, were it not a part and parcel of the whole."

"According to what you say, it is clear that all solar systems, whether known and visible to us or otherwise, in some way or other are connected one with the other," said the doctor contemplatively. "However, do you think, Count, these planetary connections have anything to do with our individual lives?"

"That hardly needs an answer, for it is a self-evident fact that if an atom cannot exist without being subjected to the general laws governing all, how can any individual claim the privilege of being free from it?" was the reply.

"Then are we to conclude that individual lives are governed by an external agency the same as the tides of the seas are?" inquired Dr. Stuart.

"I do not see how you can escape that conclusion unless you would persist in the theory of separatism, which in my estimation is the greatest folly of our age," answered Count Morat. "We are affected by heat and cold. A bright day makes us feel happy and a gloomy one occasions depression of our spirits. The seasons of the year have as much to do with us as the periodical occurrences of day and night caused by the

rotation of our earth. Our relations with men shape our temperaments. We sympathize with those in misfortune and rejoice in the happiness of others. In brief, we are controlled by a thousand and one external agencies surrounding us, which derive their origin from the laws governing all."

"In that case, what becomes of our free will, Count?" asked the rector.

"Oh, that free will, the sweet will, hatched and reared in the brains of theologians!" exclaimed the Count.

"Now, really, it does not matter in whose brain it was hatched," remarked Dr. Stuart in a mitigating tone. "Let us comply with the old saying, '*Amicus Plato, amicus Socrates, sed magis amica veritas.*' The fact is, for centuries we have been taught the highest attribute we possess is free will. Should we dismiss this idea, the whole structure of our conception of the merit or demerit of a given human act goes to pieces. It would be a death blow to our understanding concerning the superior qualities of man."

"I do not doubt it, for should you find out that this so-called free will is one of the many chimerical conceptions advocated by the theologians, you would lose the last *point d'appui* of your standing," ended the Count.

"Precisely," exclaimed the doctor, "and this is why I wish to know something more definite about it."

"You do not need to go very far, my dear friend, to find out the real truth in the matter," said Count Morat.

"Which is—?" queried the divine.

"That free volition, as the theologians understand it, does not exist," answered the Count.

"Is this a theory?" asked Dr. Stuart.

"Only a cold fact," was the answer.

"And supported—?" suggested the divine.

"By long and well established experiences," replied the Count. "If, as you say, man possesses a free will, do you not think he ought to be able to substantiate it by facts?"

"That is exactly what he does," exclaimed the rector.

"You mean, your man. But you forget that he does it after you have inculcated in him the idea that he is the happy possessor of it."

"Do you mean to say, Count, that we have no choice?" inquired Dr. Stuart.

"Not at all," responded Count Morat. "On the contrary, had we no choice, the matter would assume an entirely different aspect. But as it is, the simple fact that we have choice forcibly demonstrates that we have no free will. Evidently you have not thought much about this subject. However, should you investigate the matter closely, you will readily discover that the choice by which our actions are guided invariably is effected by preference, and preference always has more than one reason which in a given case constitutes the actuating cause. You wish to buy a horse. Before you do this, you examine many horses, and guided by reasons which most appeal to your judgment, you make your choice. Do you call this a free act? However, before we go any farther, I wish you would kindly tell me the exact definition of free will, according to the teachings of theologians?"

"It is very simple," replied Dr. Stuart. "Free will means exactly what the words convey, that is to say, a

will entirely free from any either external or internal compulsory causes."

"And this is based—?" suggested the Count.

"On the dogma which teaches that God created man and endowed him with free will. Hence the merit and demerit of the acts of his choice and the responsibility that follows them," ended the rector.

"The definition is quite clear," remarked Count Morat. "Now let us see its practical applicability. Will you, doctor, give me an illustration from your own experience in support of your theoretical definition?"

"Willingly," said Dr. Stuart, with a sort of bravado. "For instance: I have come here prompted solely by my free and good will. There was nothing that could have compelled my coming here. Had I wished, I could have stayed home,—could I not?"

"What you could have done, my dear doctor, is of no value to us. What we have to consider is what you already have done, the accomplished fact. And the fact is that you are here, and not where you think you could have stayed if you had wished to," replied Count Morat. "And this,—your being here,—you consider an act, as you say, prompted by your free will. Please remember your definition, that free will, according to the interpretation of theologians, means a will actuated by no causes. Now will you kindly reflect for a moment and see whether you really did not have some causes for coming here. If you had no cause, do you think you would have come here, doctor?"

"I see the point," exclaimed the divine. "Yes, indeed, there were causes, and many of them, which prompted my coming here. Do you know, Count, I

never thought of this subject in the way you are now leading me to?"

"I do not doubt it. You being a theologian, this mode of thinking is entirely new to you," said Count Morat. "However, allow me to relate to you one of my latest experiences: A few days ago I went to visit one of our educational institutions in the city. I was received by a personal friend of mine, Dr. H., very courteously, and conducted to several classrooms of particular interest. One of these was a large room devoted to the study of physics. Here I found several large tables, around which were grouped students conducting microscopic observations. Having approached the nearest table, one of the students asked me whether I wished to examine any particular object. Upon learning that I had nothing special in view, he proposed to show me what he termed a most curious sight. Saying this, he took a drop of stagnant water from a small vessel standing near by, dropped it on a small flat glass, and adjusted it to the microscope standing on the table. When I looked into the eye piece, I saw in that drop of water three tiny animalcules swimming around leisurely and with perfect ease, as though in a spacious lake. Further examination disclosed their shapely figures and normal movements conducted with uninterrupted calmness. At this moment, my friend, the student, took two tiny wires connected with electric batteries and brought them in contact with the drop of water under my observation, and oh, wonders! the moment the wires came in touch with the water and the electric fluid began to circulate, I saw a regular circus. These tiny creatures, hitherto calm and serene, began to jump in an erratic manner. They ran hither and

thither, now circuitously, now crossing in a direct line, trying to outdo each other in the velocity of their movements. There were all sorts of acrobatic performances in this drop of water. It was a sight, if not most curious, certainly most instructive. Now the student removed the electric wires, and suddenly there was a change of scene. The former calm was reëstablished, and the little animals once more began to swim around slowly and leisurely as though nothing had happened. The sight of this one drop of water and its tiny inhabitants plunged me into an ocean of thought. Were these animalcules theologians, and had I asked them why, in the course of their normal and peaceful lives, they unexpectedly became erratic and started to jump furiously as though wishing to break their necks, would they not tell me that the jumping in question was merely an expression of hilarity actuated by their sweet free will? Would they not insist that their leisure movements were as much due to their free will as the erratic race in which they indulged for a while? Certainly this is what they would have insisted upon. Why so? Simply because, owing to their limitations, they did not know anything whatever of their surroundings outside of that drop of water, which constituted their whole world. They knew nothing of the college where the experiment took place, nor did they know of the aims and objects of the students who instituted the experiment, and much less did they know of the electric current which set them wild and forced them to become for the time being a company of aquatic acrobats. This, my dear doctor, is a perfect picture of ourselves and our doings. We are like these animalcules in a drop of water, when compared with the immensity of

the universe. We know little, or absolutely nothing, of the forces surrounding us, and oftentimes still less do we know of the immediate causes which actuate and govern our daily deeds. Now we are pleasant and obliging, now sentimental and dreamy, and again prey to apathy, despondency, and indolence. There is, however, one consolation, namely, that we possess one particular faculty which places us higher than those animalcules—the intellect. This intellect, which is the sum total of our experiences, enables us to know that we are living in a world of causes, and the nature of these we can know, if we will, by systematic observation and diligent study.

“However, returning to the causes which actuated your coming here, my dear doctor, let me remind you that when I invited you for a few days’ rest to this charming little resort, while you expressed your appreciation of the tendered invitation, you did not accept it immediately. You wanted to think about the matter before you would comply with my request. Now let us consider what the object of this thinking was? Was it not that you wished to ascertain whether there were sufficient and justifiable reasons for leaving your parish for a few days?”

“Yes, indeed, that was the case,” answered the divine.

“And you found them in favor of your coming here, did you not?” inquired the Count.

“Evidently I did, for my presence here attests it,” replied the rector laconically.

“Then do you not see that your assent was actuated by these causes?” asked Count Morat.

“I beg your pardon, Count,” said the divine with em-

phasis. "It seems to me your logic is somewhat defective. While I agree with you that there were causes which prompted me to comply with your wishes, these were only of secondary consideration. The first was your invitation. Had you not invited me, I would have no motive for going in quest of the causes in question."

"How delightful!" exclaimed the Count. "The more we enter into details the stronger our case becomes. Having discovered one cause, we enter into a chain of endless causes. This leads us to the fact that no matter where we turn, we are bound to face the workings of the law of causality, and the most important part of it is that every living entity endowed with intelligence knows this. No matter what happens in the whirlpool of everyday human doings, the first question that is asked is, why? What was the cause of it? A man shot and killed his wife, is the report. Why did he kill his wife? is the first thought that occurs to those interested. For a husband to kill his wife is not an everyday occurrence. Why so? Simply because the other causes which govern marital life are known to the general public as being of a peaceful nature. Owing to this, the opinion prevails that the life of a married couple should be a picture of harmony and happiness. And this is based on the fact that by experience they know this to be so in the majority of cases. However, should anyone, for any particular reason, ask an interested person why his friend, a Mr. White, is constant in his love and admiration for his wife, he will not fail to point out the cause, or causes, which, in his opinion, are the actuating factors in the case. He will tell the inquirer of the many charming qualities, either real or

imaginary, which constitute the attractive features of the person in question. No man is ever surprised at the inquiry of causes. On the contrary, the man who does not inquire the causes of an incident, no matter what its nature, is considered wanting. In brief, my dear doctor, the presence of the law of cause and effect is so conspicuous in everything that we know that it would be folly to deny the existence of it."

"To deny the existing order of causality is not my object," remarked the divine, "although I confess I have not given much thought to it. However, this short discussion places me in a position where I can see the importance of it. Yet while the subject appears to be vital, in my estimation it becomes of doubtful merit inasmuch as it interferes with our conceptions of free will. If all our actions are actuated by certain causes, I repeat, what becomes of our will, which supposedly is free from all causes? You intimated there was no free will. But to tell the truth I cannot reconcile myself to your views."

"Very natural, very natural," answered Count Morat. "However, please remember the axiom of your quotation: 'Plato may be our friend, Socrates also, but Truth we must consider our best friend.' This fact that you cannot reconcile yourself to the other fact, that there is no free will, is not without a cause of its own."

"Again a cause!" exclaimed the divine.

"Yes, indeed, again and again, and so on *ad infinitum*," echoed the Count, greatly amused at the exclamation of his friend, the theologian.

"Then it follows," argued the divine, "that your belief that there is no free will must also have its cause?"

"Most assuredly," said the Count approvingly. "We both have serious causes for our beliefs. The only question, however, that arises is to what extent are we justified in being guided by these causes, which are essentially different in every individual case. Those regulating your opinions are not the same which formulate mine, nor are mine those of a third person. This being the case, before we approach the immediate causes of a given opinion, we are forced to ask what that particular cause is which creates these differences in the mass of actuating causes in each individual life? In your case, you have already answered this when you said that for centuries we have been taught the highest attribute we possess is free will, and should we dismiss this idea, the whole structure of our conceptions of the merit or demerit of a given human act would go to pieces, and this would be detrimental to our understanding concerning the superior qualities of man; while on my part, I am guided solely by empirical knowledge concerning the case. Thus, while I follow the dictation of a demonstrable knowledge, you base your belief in the existence of a free will purely on the authority of a theological doctrine. But is this doctrine sufficiently meritorious to stand the scrutiny of our age? That this doctrine has been advocated for centuries in our western world by a set of men whom we designate as theologians has no more merit than have the other doctrines advanced by the same set of men with much the same emphasis, which, owing to the advanced knowledge of our age, we have rejected as untenable. The doctrine of creation, that of our earth being the center of the universe, and a mass of similar teachings, are a fair example."

"I beg your pardon," said the divine, "but this doctrine of our earth being the center of the universe is entirely new to me. Where do you take that from, Count?"

"From you, my dear doctor, from the teachings of your church," answered Count Morat calmly. "I am surprised to learn that you do not know the fundamental doctrines of your creed. Recollect the sixteenth paragraph of the first chapter of Genesis, which reads:

"'And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night; he made the stars also.' And the following: 'And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth.'

"What can be more explicit than the meaning conveyed by these two paragraphs? First of all, God created heaven and earth. Finding what he had done was good, on the third day of his labors, he created the greater light, which is the sun, and the lesser light, which supposedly is the moon, and simultaneously he created the stars also. That these celestial bodies, the sun, the moon, and the myriads of stars, which constitute the universe, were created for the convenience of our charming little planet is evident from the fact that their creation only followed that of our earth, and that they were set in the firmament of the heaven for the sole purpose of giving light upon the earth. This being the case, what can be more conclusive than the fact that were it not for our earth there would be no universe? Omitting the stupendous contradiction arising from the admission that the light was created before the creation of the sun, and that concerning the moon

(which the Scriptures name a lesser light), while the light produced by that satellite is only a reflection of that of the sun, the doctrine of our earth being the center of the universe indisputably stands firm as that upon which you base all your doctrines. You cannot justly deny this."

"Well," said the divine contemplatively, "following the meaning of the paragraphs quoted, your deduction seems inevitable. However, this being a matter entirely foreign to the subject of our discussion, we will dismiss it without further consideration. While I agree with you as to the untenability of a mass of doctrines of Judaic origin, I still cannot see clearly that concerning free will."

"Unless you are determined to abide by the scholastic doctrine, regardless of right or wrong, I cannot conceive how you can logically resist, facing as you do the self-evident fact in the workings of the all pervading law of cause and effect," said the Count.

"Then do you mean to say that we have no will at all?" asked the divine.

"No, indeed," replied the Count. "To say that we have no will would be to deny the existence of the law of cause and effect. What we call a will, my dear doctor, is simply an effect of a cause. Where there is no cause, there is no will, which goes to show that the will is simply an effect of a given cause. This is a self-evident fact which cannot be rejected by any reasoning. To establish this we do not need any authority. Our own observation solves this problem fairly well. That in many cases the actuating cause is not susceptible to our observation only indicates our limitations and not the absence of the cause, as was the case with the ani-

malcules in the one drop of water, who knew not the cause of their action."

"But then," resumed Dr. Stuart, "do you not think this leads us into a terrible chaos? To think that a man is good simply because he must be good, and another is bad because he must be bad, means that there is no merit or responsibility to any human act. Are we to conclude that we are nothing more than little machines, destined to perform a certain function? This is what is called fatalism."

"Fatalism, when properly understood, my dear doctor, is as justifiable a term as any other in common use, conveying a partial truth," replied Count Morat. "When we consider that we are living in a world governed by cause and effect, if fatalism means that the effect must necessarily follow the cause, the term assumes quite an authoritative aspect. In order to see the importance of this, turn your attention once more to the wonderful machinery of the universe. Beginning with the marvellous laws of attraction and gravitation and ending with the most common, everyday occurrences, should you review them with an intelligent method, you are bound to see and be firmly convinced of an endless chain of causes behind them. Your saying that this leads us to a terrible chaos reflects only the fact that whatever does not agree with the set of conceptions we are familiar with appears to us a chaos. But this is not the case. Let us consider your next sentence. You seem to be horrified at the thought that a good man is good because he must be good, and another is bad because he must be bad. Is it not a fact that men are good or bad simply because they must be so? Take an example from your own life. Can you

kill a man or commit a highway robbery, doctor?"

"No, I do not think I could perpetrate either of these crimes," answered the divine.

"Very well, then," said Count Morat. "The question that naturally follows is, why can you not commit either of the crimes mentioned? Is it because you are afraid of the consequences that would follow—namely, that the criminal laws would go after you,—or because you think it inconvenient and unbecoming your social standing, or because by doing this you would display your inconsistency with the teachings you propagate, or, finally, because you are afraid you would be condemned to hell?"

"Oh, no, no," exclaimed Dr. Stuart, with emphasis, "I would not commit either of these crimes, not because of the consequences enumerated, but simply because, no matter what my situation in life, I know, I am certain, I could not kill a man any more than I could kill a dog, nor could I commit any kind of robbery."

"That is exactly the case with every good man," remarked Count Morat. "I am not a sot, a toper, simply because I cannot endure such a practice. This being the case, do you not see clearly that you are good because you must be good?"

"Well," said the divine, "after reflection this seems to be the case. But then, this leads us to the conclusion that a similar order must exist with the bad man."

"Precisely," affirmed the Count. "The same law governs the man of bad habits. You cannot reform a professional criminal who has not outgrown his calling, by any of the methods known to our legislators. The criminologists tell us of innumerable examples of individuals who spend their lives coming out of and going

back to the prison cell. After every crime committed, when caught, the criminal is imprisoned, but as soon as he is out he commits the selfsame crime again, and again, and this continues to the end of his days."

"While the deductions you make, my dear Count, seem to be logical," said Dr. Stuart contemplatively, "they upset entirely the set of views we have. They are decidedly revolutionary. Should we propagate these views, do you not think we would lose the incentive for good and encourage evil?"

"I do not think so," replied the Count. "No matter how I try, I cannot make a good man a criminal. The apparent revolutionary tendencies of these views are due to the fact that we measure things with our limited compass. That this is a fact, great thinkers agree. Let us quote one of them, a prince of poets, whom we

both greatly admire:

"'All nature is but art, unknown to thee;
All chance, direction, which thou canst not see;
All discord, harmony not understood;
All partial evil, universal good:
And, spite of pride, in erring reason's spite,
One truth is clear, *WHATEVER IS, IS RIGHT.*'

What can be more revolutionary than these sentences? Yet never was told a greater truth than that expressed so forcibly in this admirable stanza. Guided by our limitation, we see many defects in the existing order of our world. Yet '*All nature is but art; alas, unknown to us.*' Numerous and varied incidents in our lives, the causes of which we know not, we call chance. It was by mere chance that many a discovery has been made, we say,—many battles won, many paupers risen

to riches, many innocents hung, many lives and much property destroyed, many worthless individuals come to power. All of these and innumerable other similar incidents, the actuating causes of which are not known to us, we call chance. Yet the stupendous fact is there is no chance, meaning an incident without cause. '*All so-called chance is but direction which, lo, thou canst not see.*' Wars, tempests, earthquakes, destructive epidemics and all sorts of calamities, measured by our incompetency, are called discord. Yet should we perceive the actuating causes of these in the mist of a long forgotten past and the effects that follow them in the distant future, we are bound to repeat confidently the wise words of the poet, '*All discord is but harmony not understood.*' Crimes of all kinds which fill the pages of our annals we call the evil of the day. Yet when these are viewed from a larger horizon than ours, we are bound to see '*All partial evil, universal good,*' and, '*Whatever is*' certainly '*is right.*' "

"Do you know, Count, the views you wish to convey are simply inaccessible to an ordinary mind? Nay, many a man of superior training will not grasp it. The '*Essay on Man,*' from which you quote the stanza, always impressed me deeply. However, notwithstanding my best efforts, I must confess I cannot understand it yet."

"Very natural, my dear doctor, very natural," responded the Count. "But do you know why?"

"I wish you would tell me, Count," said the divine.

"Simply because your theological training stands in your way," replied Count Morat. "The eminent poet is vastly at variance with you, when in his second epistle he starts by saying:

“‘Know then thyself, presume not God to scan;
The proper study of mankind is man.’

This is not the way you would approach the subject. To you man is no theme for study. He is simply a worm of theological fabric. What is worse, *you do presume God to scan*. Not unless you follow the advice of the poet will you understand him.

“‘Go, wondrous creature! Mount where science guides,’
he says; and again:

“‘Trace science then, with modesty thy guide!’

“Yes, indeed, only by experimental knowledge can we learn things worth while. To start with, we must remember, my dear doctor, what we call good and evil are only conceptions of a given time. That this is an unassailable fact we can see by comparing our conceptions of good and evil today with those of the past. The good and evil, justice and injustice, of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, are not ours. It was good and commendable to them to believe and worship the Olympian gods; not so to us. It was good and commendable to the daughters of the Lydians to prostitute themselves in order to provide the dowries necessary for an honorable marriage; not so to our daughters. It was good and virtuous, nay, a sacred duty, to every respectable matron of Babylon once in her life to sit in the temple of Venus and have intercourse with some stranger. It was supremely good to Catholics to destroy Protestants and their countries. It was highly commendable to Protestants to eradicate Catholicism. These and innumerable other conceptions, when compared with those of today in regard to these matters

show how vastly we differ from those of the past. There is no human act which carries an intrinsic value in its merit or demerit. Should you kill a man maliciously, you would have to suffer the penalty of death; but should you do so in defending your life, you would have no responsibility whatever. In both of these cases the crime of homicide is committed. Yet while in the first case it carries penal responsibility, in the second it ceases to be a crime. Examples like this are too numerous to be quoted here. From this it is evident that there are only acts, nothing but acts, prompted by their respective and legitimate causes. To kill a man, whether maliciously or in self-defence, is simply an act, whose degree of merit or demerit is determined by the conceptions we have, which in their turn are the products of our growth. Owing to this, the value of human acts varies and changes as rapidly as our conceptions of good and evil are changed. This change, however, is not effected in one or two generations; hence the duration of a set of conceptions for many centuries. This being the case, it is only proper that we should inquire into the causes of these changes of opinions, which, like all other things, do not occur by chance. The great cause which is the regulator of human conceptions is growth. The opinion of a child is not that of an adult, and much less that of a mature man. The same ruling prevails when we consider the whole of the human race and the epoch of its duration. This growth, a subject on which I have already talked with you, necessarily leads us to the discovery of two great laws which the Christian world unpardonably ignores. One is the law governing the continuity of individual life of every living entity, and the other, the

law of cause and effect. It is erroneous to believe and teach that a man begins his life the moment his mother conceives him, and equally erroneous is the assertion that he ends his life when he dies. The first is eminently the doctrine of your church, and the second that of monistic adherents of today. Both of these doctrines contradict reason and the law governing all. Owing to the fact that you ignore these two stupendous laws in their specific course and form, you are at variance with the constructive powers of nature. Hence your obscure, illogical, and oftentimes puerile speculations in the realm of life and death. Being guided by the Judaic conceptions, you utterly fail to conceive the idea '*whatever is, is right.*' By ignoring the continuity of the individual life in conformity with the laws accessible to our senses, you are forced to ignore the workings of growth, covering many hundred thousand years. By ignoring the workings of the law of cause and effect, you are prompted to create free will, which is so indispensable to the structure of your creed. This imaginary free will, a clumsy invention of scholastics, is the main basis and sole foundation of your theological doctrines. You need it very much, for it constitutes the point of departure of all of your teachings concerning morality. Had you not assigned to man a free will, you could not consider him responsible for his acts, nor could you have conceptions of the merit and demerit of his deeds. And again, had you no such conceptions, you would have no use for heaven and hell. But heaven and hell you need, and if for no other reason, you must have free will. From this you can see clearly that the doctrines based upon free will are as untenable as the doctrine of free will itself is.

'Falsus in uno, falsus in omnibus.' Yes, my dear doctor, when the fundamental doctrine is false, the rest must necessarily be false also. Let unbiased judgment prevail, and you will be bound to accept the fact that free volition, or will actuated without causes, does not exist. The workings of the sublime law of cause and effect, so prominently and imposingly displayed in nature, makes its acceptance utterly impossible. It is ignorance of the laws of nature that is the cause of your speculative failures. Owing to this, the doctrines you preach are misleading. The doctrine of creation, that of free will, that of remuneration and punishment, and the rest which follow them, are radically inadmissible and grievously erroneous inasmuch as they are the inevitable result of ignorance of the laws governing all."

"Your saying, my dear Count, that there are no good and evil acts of intrinsic value, does not change the situation," remarked the rector contemplatively. "You cannot make me believe crime is not evil, nor can you deny that virtue is good."

"No, indeed, I cannot change your opinion of crime, nor can I alter mine of virtue so long as our conceptions are of the present standard; hence that was not the object I had in view," replied Count Morat quickly. "What I wished to state is this simple fact, that the merit of a given human act is determined not by the act itself, but by the conceptions we have of the utility or harmfulness of it, which we call good and evil respectively, as the case may be."

"Then you admit that there are good and evil acts, do you not?" inquired the divine.

"What I admit is the fact that there are acts which

we call good and evil," replied the Count. "There is a vast difference between what you wish to convey and what I affirm. The merit of an act determined by a set of changeable conceptions decidedly cannot constitute the intrinsic value of it."

"The distinction you make, my dear Count, while very refined, does not answer our query satisfactorily. However, to test its merit, let me ask you,—does an evil act carry any responsibility?" inquired Dr. Stuart.

"Not in the way you understand it," answered Count Morat. "To imagine the Almighty sitting on His golden throne to judge each and every man is too human to deserve any credence. According to the tenet of your doctrines, a delinquent is brought before the tribunal of a severe judge, where he is accused of wrongdoing. There is an angel, whatever his rank may be, who performs the duties of a district attorney, and another who defends him. After hearing the case, should the judge (who in this case is God Himself) find him guilty of serious misconduct, the man in question is condemned to the eternal tortures of hell, or should he be found good and virtuous, he is invited to participate in the eternal bliss of heaven. This picture, my dear doctor, is too puerile to represent the actual truth. Such responsibility as this decidedly does not exist, nor does any other kind of responsibility which involves a judicial procedure. The acts which we call good and evil, while they are legitimate effects of their respective causes, become actuating causes themselves and produce corresponding effects, which in a given case constitute the sum total of remuneration or punishment rightly belonging to the man involved in the

case. A good deed is bound to produce good effect. Evil is always the mother of evil, and the man who is the producer either enjoys or suffers the consequences."

"Do you mean to say, Count, the only consequences the evil perpetrator is destined to suffer are the effects produced by his deed?" inquired the divine.

"That is exactly what I mean," replied Count Morat.

"Then aside from that there is no responsibility—is that what you mean?" asked the rector.

"Precisely," affirmed the Count. "The trouble with you theologians is that you wish to reproduce the existing order of social life in the workings of the laws which govern the whole universe. In other words, you wish to run the universe according to the fashion established by crude and deficient men. If anything, this fact alone shows how ridiculously small is the scope of your speculation. The world of old times was governed exclusively by kings; therefore you must have a king of kings in heaven. The kings had all kinds of armies, gendarmes, and police; therefore the king of heaven must have his legions of angels with the militant archangels, cherubim, and seraphim, and legions of devils under the management of Beelzebub and his friend, Satan. The kings had courtiers of different degrees; therefore the king of heaven must have his martyrs, confessors, doctors, and virgins. The kings rewarded men for their services to the throne by bestowing upon them an abundance of worldly goods; therefore the king of heaven must reward those who serve the interests of the church faithfully by giving them heavenly goods. The kings had established tribunals and judges, whose business was to hear accusa-

tions and sentence evildoers to banishments, prisons, and the gallows; therefore the king of heaven, being more solicitous than the kings of earth are, takes this delicate duty upon himself and becomes the judge of judges, hears the cases brought before him and thrusts the evildoers into the eternal tortures of hell. The kings and their subjects, according to their growth and need, formulated conceptions of good and evil; therefore the king and the great judge of heaven must have the same conceptions of good and evil. The kings and their governments, in order to define the relations of their subjects to the throne and strengthen the laws enacted by them for the welfare of their respective countries, coined the word of *responsibility*; therefore the king of heaven must have this very word and make use of it just the same as earthly kings do. Is this not the way you picture the government of the heaven of your own creation and preach it to your followers? Can there be anything more puerile, nay, more senseless and inconsistent than this parody of human affairs reflected in matters pertaining to the great laws governing all? The laws which govern the universe, my dear doctor, are not made according to the pattern invented by theologians. Hence your word *responsibility*, while applicable to human affairs, has no standing whatever in the realm of the laws of nature."

"You strike your hammer quite efficiently, Count," said the rector contemplatively. "What is worse, I have no defence to offer, except perhaps a feeble one which reflects that, being human as we are, we must use such terms and such methods as our mode of thinking most requires and as are most impressive. To assert that your statement in regard to heavenly affairs

being conducted according to the pattern of our own was not true, would be only a biased opinion of mine. The language you use, alas, is ours, and the analogy is but correct. However, let us return to the main subject of our discussion. According to your views, then, we cannot use the word *responsibility*, and therefore we must acquiesce in the fact that the evildoer gets what he deserves in the shape of effects which follow his deeds. It happens, however, that I know facts which emphatically contradict this statement. There are men who, under the mantle of decency and respectability, lead the lives of professional criminals. They live luxuriously and enjoy themselves far better than many a respectable, law-abiding citizen does. For instance, I know of one man particularly, who lived all his life in iniquity and died in worldly luxury, leaving many millions of ill-gotten wealth to his successors. This being a case well known to me personally, I fail to see the veracity of your statement,—namely, that the evildoer must suffer the consequences of his wrongdoings. The man in question spent all his days in amassing an immense fortune on gaming tables and in dishonest and disreputable speculations, and the consequences, if any, were of a nature that gave him the supremest enjoyment. If your statement be correct, how do you account for the total absence of its application in this case?"

"That you have known such a case, my dear doctor, I doubt not, for I myself have known similar cases and many of them," resumed Count Morat. Prince Radziwill, a Lithuanian nobleman of fame, who married the daughter of the famous Frenchman, the promoter and owner of Monte Carlo, lived in Paris in full enjoyment

of all the respectability and honors due to an honest man, while his wealth steadily flowed to his coffers, coming, as it did, from the green tables of that still famous gambling resort, of the lion's share of which he was the possessor. In connection with this, allow me to tell you that a large number of shares of the Monte Carlo establishment at that time, some twenty years ago, were held by the highest dignitaries of the Roman Catholic hierarchy. This might seem to you incredible, yet it is only a fact, for I have this information from reliable sources. Here let me repeat what I said before,—namely, that it is the conception men have of good and evil that is operative, and this is as applicable to the man of your description as it is to the venerable prelates who did not hesitate to invest their money in the gambling institution of Monte Carlo. However, let us resume our subject. You told me your case, now permit me to tell you mine.

“While living in France, through a curious, what we call incident, I met and became acquainted with a pathetic old man, in a little town situated in the neighborhood of Paris, whose name was Antoine Poitier. If ever there was a man of sterling qualities, honest and kind, always willing to divide the little he had with those who needed it most, that man was certainly the pious Frenchman I knew so well. Père Poitier, as he was called by his neighbors, was a very poor man, and in addition he had a large family to support. Owing to this, he worked very hard, yet notwithstanding his incessant labors and well managed savings, for reasons unknown to him he never succeeded in making both ends meet, and lived from hand to mouth, as the popular saying goes. I must add, however, that père

Poitier, although he had only a common school education, was a philosopher of no mean perspicacity, and as such he was naturally inclined to thinking, frequently musing over the problems of life and death, good and evil, justice and injustice, and kindred matters. One day he was taken ill, and although no danger of his death was anticipated, he being of a religious turn of mind, a priest was summoned to his bedside. The following is the conversation which took place on that occasion, which was related to me by one of his sons who happened to be present at the time.

"'For many years,' said the old man, turning to the priest seated near by, 'I have longed to solve some problems that interested me greatly, and so far I have not been able to accomplish my cherished object. Now that I am nearing the end of my journey, and you, mon père, are here, will you permit me to ask you a few questions?'"

"'Certainly, my friend, certainly,' said the venerable priest, in a sympathetic tone which gave assurance and encouragement to the sick man. 'You may ask any number of questions you desire.'

"'You see, mon père,' resumed the old man thoughtfully, 'the questions I wish to ask are of a nature I never ventured to discuss with anybody, for I am certain no one could have answered them satisfactorily. But I know you can. Now that you are kind enough to listen to me, I will speak my mind.'

"'Do so, by all means,' said the priest benignantly, not suspecting the nature of his query.

"'You know, mon père,' said the sick man, 'I lived my life as a Christian man should. Never during the many years of my tedious journey have I committed an evil

deed. I worked very hard all my days, and never did I spend one *sou* which was not applied to the immediate necessities of my family.'

"'Yes, my friend, I know all that is true,' said the priest approvingly. 'You have performed your duties as the father of a family in a way that is very commendable.'

"'I am glad you think that way,' said the sick man, adjusting himself in his bed. Then turning to the priest he asked, 'Mon père, do you not teach that God is just?'

"'Why certainly, my friend, the all merciful God is most just,' answered the priest.

"'I thought so and believed so,' murmured the old man, sighing deeply. 'Now, mon père, will you tell me what it is to be just?'

"'To be just is to do right,' answered the priest, perfectly amazed at the nature of this simple peasant's inquiries.

"'Mon père,' resumed the old man, 'is it not just that everyone should get what he deserves?'

"'Yes, indeed, it is only just that everyone should get what he deserves,' answered the priest.

"'That a good man should get the blessings of God, and a bad man should be deprived of his munificence,—is not this an act of justice?' inquired Mr. Poitier.

"'Most assuredly, my friend, most assuredly,' repeated the priest with increasing astonishment at the outcome of the queries.

"'And the blessings of God, in what form does the good man receive these blessings, mon père?' asked the peasant.

"'The blessings of God are twofold, my friend,' re-

plied the priest, "those pertaining to the welfare of his soul and those pertaining to his temporal needs."

"And does the good man receive both of these?" inquired the old man.

"If he is deserving, certainly he gets both of them," was the answer.

"But you already agreed with me that it was an act of the justice of God that a good man should get the blessings of God, and a bad man should be deprived of his munificence. Now, mon père, will you tell me, who, in your opinion, is a good man?" asked Mr. Poitier.

"The good man is he who loves God above all things, who lives according to his commandments, and follows the instructions of his holy church," replied the priest.

"And the bad man?" asked père Poitier.

"He who lives in iniquity and does not repent is a bad man," was the answer.

"Mon père, did you say I was a good man?" was the next question.

"Yes, indeed, I said so, and I believe you have led the life of a good man," answered the priest.

"Then do you not think I am entitled to the blessings of a good man in full measure, mon père?" queried the old man.

"Certainly you are, my friend," said the priest; "but why do you ask these questions?"

"If your statement," resumed the old man, ignoring the question put by the priest, "that God is just in distributing His blessings is true, and that everyone should get what he deserves is also true, and that God bestows His full blessings, pertaining both to

the soul and the body, upon a good man is also true, and that I, being a good man according to your testimony, am entitled to these blessings is equally true,—does it not follow that should I be denied these blessings, an act of injustice would be committed towards me?”

“‘That would be the inference, had you not received the blessings in question,’ answered the priest, ‘but the Almighty has already bestowed upon you rare blessings, my friend, in giving you piety and Christian virtues. Besides, the family you have must be an object of gratification to you in your old age.’”

“‘It is true, God has given me a large family,’ said the old man, ‘but He also has given me dire poverty. *Mon père*,’ continued the old man, ‘do you know my neighbor, Mr. Berger, the tanner?’”

“‘Yes, I know him,’ was the answer.

“‘Do you think he is a good man, *mon père*?’ inquired Mr. Poitier.

“‘No, indeed,’ replied the priest vehemently. ‘He is an atheist of the most sanguinary type. He does not believe in God, nor in the last day of judgment. Besides, he is a notoriously bad man in the fullest sense of the word.’”

“‘If you know him, you must have seen his beautiful black team of horses, his costly carriages, and his luxurious home,’ remarked the old man.

“‘Living as he does in this little town of ours, it is only natural that everybody should know of him and his phenomenal riches, which he has amassed by objectionable and unholy means, and which he displays with all his might and main,’ returned the priest.

“‘Now, *mon père*, do you think it just that a bad

man such as Mr. Berger is should have more than he actually needs, and I, whom you designate as a good man, should live and die in poverty? You teach that God is the all-Giver. Am I wrong in concluding that He gave wealth to the bad man who does not deserve it and poverty to the good man who is entitled to His blessings? The fact is that Mr. Berger, a bad man, is very rich, and I, a good man, very poor. Is this just, mon père, is this just?" ended the sick man, overcome with emotion.

"Hush, my friend, hush. Do not speak that way. It is not proper, nay, it is blasphemy to question the wisdom of God," exclaimed the priest, greatly agitated by the boldness of his patient's remarks. "God's designs are unfathomable," added he gently.

"Pardon me, oh, pardon me, mon bon père," repeated the old man pathetically. "It is not the wisdom of God that I am questioning. It is that of men I am ascertaining. In following the sense of your holy teachings, I consider myself right when I say, if the teaching is true, my inference must also be true. I doubt not you never thought such matters as these could ever enter the mind of a poor peasant such as I am. Yet these problems have haunted me daily all my life and, alas, they still perplex me greatly. But after all, I see even you, mon père, as learned as you are in matters pertaining to justice and injustice, cannot explain them to me. What I deplore the most is that I must go to my grave without knowing why I was born in poverty, lived in poverty, and must die in dire poverty."

"The old man, Poitier, soon died as he expected, but the question why a good man as he was, entitled to

the blessings of God, should have been born in poverty, lived and died in poverty, still remains to be answered.

"The venerable French priest, who so benevolently listened to the reasoning of his patient, judging from the answers he gave, was not able to satisfactorily explain the problems which perplexed the old man. He dismissed the whole matter very diplomatically by saying that God's designs were unfathomable. This might have been due to the fact that he was not sufficiently versed in the teachings concerning the matter. Now let me ask you, doctor—you being, without flattery, the most erudite priest I ever have known—were you in his place, what solution would you have offered?"

"I do not think I could have offered him better satisfaction," answered Dr. Stuart modestly. "The case you have brought up for consideration, my dear Count, is one of many taken from life. There are men who, while living in iniquity, enjoy all the comforts of life. And again, there are others who, after the commitment of a first offence, go to prison perhaps never to enjoy their freedom again. So it is with the men whom we designate as good men. Many of them are rich, and a good many more are poor. Why do some evildoers escape deserved punishment, and others suffer excessive severity of the law? And again, why some of the virtuous are rich and others poor are vital questions which I confess no theologian can answer satisfactorily. The concluding sentence of the French priest would be all that any priest could say in a similar case."

"Yet you are in the possession of the key to the

situation should you choose to rely upon the revelations presumably imparted by God," remarked Count Morat. "Recollect the contents of the twenty-eighth chapter of Deuteronomy in which it is stated:

" 'And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all His commandments which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth.

" 'And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God.

" 'Blessed shalt thou be in the city and blessed shalt thou be in the field.

" 'Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep.

" 'Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store.'

"It was this basket, my dear doctor, that bothered the old man, Poitier, most. He hearkened diligently unto the voice of the Lord his God, and observed scrupulously all his commandments, yet his basket was empty all his life. Cases like this are so numerous among men that we need not necessarily look to that of the Frenchman. Now in my turn, let me ask you—if the quoted statement is the actual promise of God, as the Scriptures convey—God who cannot but keep His promise—how do you account for the misery and sufferings of a mass of honest and upright people whom we meet every day? They work hard for their daily bread, yet their baskets are as empty as ever. On the other hand, look at the maledictions of God, contained

in the same chapter and directed to men who do not hearken unto the voice of the Lord.

“‘Cursed shalt thou be in the city and cursed shalt thou be in the field,’ says the all merciful Lord.

“‘Cursed shall be thy basket and thy store,’ continues he, and then follow not less than fifty-one more scriptural paragraphs of the most virulent and revengeful curses ever heard or known to an honest man. To repeat them here would be an unpardonable offence against decency. Had any man of today pronounced any of these malignant curses, he certainly would be considered the most wicked man under the sun. Yet, these curses presumably came from the Lord thy God. However, notwithstanding these terrible curses, the baskets of Mr. Berger and millions like him are loaded with plenty, while men of the type of Poitier suffer misery and distressing privation.”

“While you are justified in your indignation, my dear Count, you are unnecessarily severe towards the old Jews,” remarked Dr. Stuart. “You ought never to take their sayings so seriously. The all merciful and good Lord never could have pronounced those curses were He not God, but only a better man than the man who reported them. It is inconsistent and illogical to ascribe to God such a debasing and humiliating method for the enforcement of his commandments as that of the curses is. We earnestly strive to teach our children as well as our men not to curse, for the love of God. How can we admit consistently that God Himself could have cursed in such an indecent and unbecoming manner as reported in the chapter you quote? It is not the Lord that curses, my dear Count. It is the barbarous and savage Jew, who puts in the mouth

of his God those abominable and revolting maledictions, at the mention of which one blushes with shame. Nothing is so humiliating as the reading of passages where human wickedness and base passion are attributed to God. However, the primitive Jew is not to be blamed. He saw his God in his savage way, and so described him. But it does not follow that we should be guided by the reflections of such a crude specimen of humanity as that of primitive man. No, indeed. No power in heaven above nor on the earth below can make me believe that God, being infinite goodness, can at the same time exercise such most repulsive human wickedness as that so tangibly displayed in the curses in question. What is more important, facing as we do the phenomena of life, we cannot help observing the fact, that neither the quoted blessings nor the curses accompanying them have anything to do with the doings of men. There are, as we both agree, men of sterling qualities who live and die in poverty, while many evil-doers enjoy the comforts of life."

"Well said, my dear doctor," rejoined Count Morat. "It is inconsistent with the sublime attributes of God to ascribe to Him such methods as cursing. The wise man who undertakes to accomplish something does not employ either blessings or curses. How much less must He whose undertakings are governed by infinite wisdom? While blessing is an expression of good will, cursing is the product of one's powerlessness, and this certainly cannot be the case with God, whom men believe all powerful. However, while we both agree that God could not have cursed, the teaching that God curses with as much vehemence as He blesses with benevolence remains the standard doctrine of the church.

That this doctrine is not consistent with actual facts is plainly evident from the observations we make. This being the case, are we not forced to conclude that the doctrine of Judaic origin concerning the distribution of God's blessings is radically erroneous?"

"This seems to be the case," consented the divine thoughtfully. "It would be useless to deny that the matters brought up for our consideration, as I said before, cannot be satisfactorily explained by the methods at the disposal of the church. This is why I wish to know the opinions of others than theologians concerning these vital questions. However, the more we persist in our queries, the greater are the complications we face, and what is more important, the farther we are from our original subject. I am afraid, my dear Count, you forget that my question still remains unanswered."

"No, indeed," answered the Count; "the subjects I have brought up in the interim for your consideration, being closely correlated to the one you presented, after our short review throw a better light on the whole and enable us to proceed more effectively. The stand the church takes in matters pertaining to the relation existing between the Creator and His creation is of a character which permits no doubt as to the exactness and correctness of the information it claims to possess concerning the subject. The church explicitly asserts that it knows with almost mathematical precision the divine attributes of God and His government. It teaches ways and means of avoiding His wrath and gaining His paternal benevolence. It tells its faithful who a good man is and who a bad one. It tells how God will act toward the former and what He will do with the

latter. It tells what is justice and what injustice, what is right and what is wrong. It tells that Poitier is a good man and Berger is a bad man. And yet, when a man of the type of Poitier, after having reasoned out from the teachings of the church that an act of injustice had been committed against him, wishes to know why it should be so, the church, in the person of its priest, pleads ignorance by saying that God's designs are unfathomable. This very answer is invariably offered when one wishes to know why a Berger and his ilk are the possessors of what justly belongs to a better man than they. How shallow all of this is! The church knows all, yet it knows nothing reliable, nothing demonstrable. Why so? Simply because it is guided by a set of views based merely on the visionary sayings of the old Jews,—the old Jews, who knew absolutely nothing of the laws of nature, whose whole world was only a small portion of what today constitutes Asiatic Turkey, and whose wisest and most advanced man knew not what was on the other side of the Atlantic. Such is the ground upon which the Christian church of today, as progressive as it appears to be, bases its doctrines, and claims to be the happy possessor of the key to the mysteries of life and death. In the face of this fact, and in these days of progression and experimental growth of the race, how ridiculous it is to expect an intelligent man should submit himself to such doctrines and be guided by them, I need not state. Thus, while the church you represent, my dear doctor, is earnestly engaged in maintaining and propagating the set of views set forth by the ancient Jews, the children of the age go about learning the laws of nature and their workings. They learn of

the imposing existence of the all pervading law which teaches that there is no destruction nor annihilation in nature. Nor is there any retrogression, all being governed by the firm and ever active law of progression. The only process which is continually in operation is that of transition of matter from one form to another. The law of indestructibility of matter and that concerning conservation of energy teach these great truths. They also learn what was in the past one hundred million years on our globe, is today, and will continue to be for many million years to come. They learn and become conscious of the fact that man is not of today. He has been here for the last three hundred thousand years, and will continue to be here for many million years to come. They learn, also, that the law which governs all phenomena and which is observable in everything they see is that of cause and effect. They learn the fact that man, like everything else, being subject to the law of progression, grows only by acquired experiences and not by visionary teachings. These experiences constitute the only ground upon which he can build his present and his future. The past made him what he is today, and the present makes of him what he will be tomorrow. Owing to this inexorable process, he gets what he deserves, what belongs to him by virtue of his growth and attainments. The causes set in motion by him in the long ago produce the effect he gets today, and those put in operation today are bound to produce legitimate effects in the future. Thus while the phenomena of life remain a mystery and the unfathomable designs of God to the adherents of Judaic doctrines, they are the simplest facts when viewed from the workings of the laws which

govern them. The life of my man of today who was born in poverty, lived and died in poverty, is the exact picture of the future life of your man who lived in iniquity and died in worldly luxury. Here is the answer to your query, my dear doctor, and this is based not on the sayings or imagining of anyone, but on the firm laws which govern all and which are accessible to our understanding. One does not need to be a philosopher to know that all phenomena are only effects of certain causes. A little observation and a little thinking will readily teach this lesson to any man who is interested in these matters. Ignorance always was and always will be the deplorable cause of our misfortunes, and those who chain masses in ignorance of the laws of nature by teaching unreliable and misleading doctrines certainly are not the best benefactors of the race."

"The prominence you give to natural laws, my dear Count, is only proper and commendable," remarked Dr. Stuart. "Should we use unbiased judgment, we are bound to agree that our first and most important duty is to study the laws which govern our immediate environment before we inquire into the cause of causes. Owing to the omission of this, alas! few of us are posted about those matters to the same degree that you are, Count. However, I am beginning to realize the importance of the workings of the law of cause and effect. Your exposition of it impresses me more and more deeply. Yet when we come to man and his doings, I am still in darkness as to the merit of his being a man. You say that all occurrences pertaining to his life are results of causes set in motion by him, which certainly implies that he must have a will, and a good

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one too, by which he sets these causes in motion. Still you affirm that man has no free will. If he has no free will, how can he set causes in motion?"

"The force generated by a waterfall, my dear doctor, has no will, either real or imaginary. Yet when harnessed and directed properly, it puts in motion a host of wheels which in their turn become causes of endless effects. The happiness and unhappiness of many men and women have their origin in this simple cause. Should the factory run by this force cease its activity, families depending upon it are liable to suffer inconveniences which in their turn become the source of many bitter experiences," ended the Count.

"If the object of this illustration is to show that a similar process takes place when the causes are set in motion by man, then all occurrences which constitute an individual life are merely products of mechanical functions. Is this what you mean, Count?" inquired the divine.

"If the absence of free will makes human activities mechanical then they are mechanical," was the answer.

"In that case, what shall we think of the intelligence of man? Is there any merit attached to it?" asked the divine.

"Certainly there is," replied Count Morat. "The success of any and all undertakings of man are entirely dependent upon the amount and application of intelligence."

"But then this application as well as the intelligence itself, also must be mechanical," said the rector. "If this be the case, in what consists the merit of intelligence?"

"Its merit consists in the result obtained by its ap-

plication and not in its mere existence," replied the Count.

"Well," exclaimed the divine, somewhat disappointed, "I confess I am not any wiser now than I was before."

"Neither would I be, had I the notions which regulate your way of thinking," rejoined Count Morat. "However, to elucidate our premises, let me ask you, doctor, what is intelligence according to the definition of theologians?"

"Intelligence, like sagacity, acumen, discernment, perspicacity, prudence, subtlety, talent, tact, and a mass of other similar faculties, is a gift of God with which men are endowed," answered Dr. Stuart.

"It is due to this very definition, my dear doctor, that you are not any wiser after hearing me than you were before," resumed the Count. "While your definition does not explain the nature of intelligence, it leads us to endless complications. If all men are alike before the Creator, as you teach, and intelligence is a gift of God, all must have the same amount of intelligence. Yet this is not the case. One man is more intelligent than another. One displays his marvellous intellectual faculties from infancy, while another lives long and dies without it. There is a Mozart, who, while a mere child, is a musical genius, and there are others who devote their whole lives to music and die knowing very little if anything about it. There is a Napoleon, who, while comparatively a young man is a giant in military tactics, and there are gray haired generals who spend their lives in acquiring the art of fighting and who become willing subordinates to the former. No, my dear doctor, your definition decidedly does not explain anything. Considering that intelli-

gence can be displayed only in the application of a certain knowledge and that no knowledge can be applicable unless it is derived from acquired experience, it becomes clear that intelligence is not a gift of any kind, but merely the sum total of the acquired experiences of the man involved in the case. You may talk for hours of an intricate mathematical problem to a man who has not grown to that understanding, and he will comprehend it as little as ever. He may learn from you minor principles he never knew before, but he will not grasp the total of your intelligence, accumulated by long experiences of your own and reflected in the presentation of the problem in hand, as readily as he would had he had experiences similar to yours. Socrates tries to impress upon the mind of his friend Meno that there is no teaching, but recollection, and he illustrates this by examining a boy, a slave of this friend. The boy readily answers questions put by Socrates only so far as his understanding permits him, and then he stops, saying that he knows no more. One of the commentators of Plato, the author of the incident quoted, in his introduction to this particular book says: 'This dialogue' (Meno) 'contains the first intimation of the doctrine of reminiscence and of the immortality of the soul. It may be observed,' he continues, 'that *the fanciful notion of pre-existence* is combined with a true view of the unity of knowledge and of the association of ideas.' If the true view of this unity of knowledge and of the association of ideas suggests the seemingly fanciful notion of pre-existence, does it not follow that the said pre-existence is as indispensable for this unity as the recognition of its being true is? In other words, this view of the unity of knowledge can be true only

then, when pre-existence precedes it. It is obvious you cannot place the last brick on a wall twenty feet high unless you have this space of twenty feet filled with bricks; nor can you feast your eyes on an oak one hundred years old without allowing the hundred years for its growth. The unity of knowledge is accessible to our senses only through the display of the various faculties of man, which taken together represent his intelligence. Thus, while intelligence is the general appellation of these faculties, knowledge is the main foundation of them. One must know how to be prudent, subtle, discerning, and sagacious in order to display prudence, subtlety, discernment, and sagacity. However, considering that no intelligence can be found where there is no knowledge, and that no knowledge can be acquired without some sort of experience; and again considering that no experience can be acquired without a given period of time, and the greater the amount of experience possessed, the longer must be the duration for its acquirement, pre-existence becomes an indispensable factor for the formation of intelligence. It is due to Judaic conceptions, which constitute the ruling element in the minds of westerners, that the views of Socrates appear fanciful. Yet how ridiculously fanciful are the notions of the ancient Jews is evident from the scope of theological speculations, which is limited to the period of the one short life of an individual. To supply the tangible deficiency the creation of every individual is brought into play, and the experiences of the distant past are labeled as gifts of God, little suspecting that by this method they mercilessly despoil God of the attributes they ascribe to Him. If He is the creator of all things, of all laws,

before He can create each individual separately He must suppress that particular law of His creation which insures and governs the continuity of every individual life. It is well-nigh impossible to speak of or even to imagine any of the human faculties, no matter under what name, without admitting man's pre-existence. If anything, these very faculties, which are not and cannot be anything else than the sum total of past experiences, emphatically corroborate the Socratic teaching, a fact which can be denied only by the liliputians of the intellectual world. Such being the origin of human faculties, if 'mechanical' means an action governed by the law of quantitative relations of force and matter, there is nothing more mechanical than the intelligence of man, which only by its quantitative and qualitative volume displays its valor. Its application demonstrates this forcibly, for problems submitted for its solution are purely of mechanical design and construction. The farmer, the architect, the geologist, the mathematician, and every other mortal, has problems of his own to solve. These problems are nothing but mechanical, inasmuch as they invariably involve a certain amount of force and matter to be combined in order that each be able to overcome a given difficulty and achieve his purpose. In trying to attach a special merit to the intelligence of man as an outstanding and independent faculty, my dear doctor, you are prompted by your desire to establish an issue for his free will, for evidently such an intelligence is as indispensable to free will as free will would be to such an intelligence, and yet neither one nor the other has a real existence as such. To conclude, let me recapitulate my remarks. While man is the most advanced in the kingdom of vertebrates,

he is not exempt from the laws governing all. His physical body, as well as his mental faculties, have undergone many modifications in the past and will be subjected to many more in the future. That he has no free will of theological fabrication, makes him no less superior to the rest of mammals. The fact is that man is not what theologians would have him be, but what nature has made him. To know him, we must know the actual laws which govern him and not the imaginary ones of Judaic origin."

"Count," said the divine thoughtfully, "the many intricate problems you have brought out in connection with the intelligence of man deserve mature and careful consideration. However, there is one particular subject I wish you would elucidate. You spoke of two laws which you said were neglected by theologians. One you indicated as the law which governs the continuity of every individual life, and the other the law of cause and effect. The last one you discussed more freely than the first. While, as I said before, the law of cause and effect is quite accessible to our senses, the other so far remains a mystery to me. What do you mean by the law of continuity of individual life, Count?"

"It is a scientifically established fact, my dear doctor, that man has been an inhabitant of this planet of ours now for a period of three hundred thousand years, more or less," replied Count Morat. "This we know by a mass of data which paleontology, or the science of fossils, offers to that effect. However, there is one particularly impressive fact, that while he is an old dweller on the earth, he does not appear to be always the same man. The man of three hundred thousand years ago

is not like the man of fifty thousand years ago. Nor is the man of the latter period like the man of today, who undoubtedly is far superior to the man of all past ages. Now let us inquire in what consists the superiority of the present man. Comparative anatomy shows that the man of today does not differ from the man of the long distant past in the structure of his physical body. In both, in the man of the past as well as in the modern man, there are found the same two hundred bones which compose their skeleton. In both skeletons there are the same three hundred muscles which serve to move the various parts of the body. The same hair covers the skin. The same mammary glands provide food for the young. The same four-chambered heart, which constitutes the central pump for the circulation of the blood, is there. The same thirty-two teeth are found in the jaws of both. The same groups of ganglionic cells compose the wondrous structure of the brain. In brief the man of today is exactly the same in the main features as the man of the long forgotten past was. From this it is evident that the superiority of the man of today does not consist in the composition of his body. It is in the mental faculties and intellectual attainments of the modern man that we find his excellence. Now the question arises, if the composition of the physical body of the present man is the same as that of the man of the past, whence comes his distinction? If the ganglionic cells which compose the structure of the brain of the man of today are exactly the same which filled the cranium of the man of old, how is it that the farther back we go in the history of man, the nearer to the animal stage of life we find him, while the man of today stands towering above all that we

call animal life? The modern monists assert that the sum total of the functions of the brain of man constitutes his soul. If this be the case, how is it that while both men, of the past and the present, have identical structure of brain, the soul of the modern man stands high above that of the man of the past? That the brain, or rather the sum total of the functions of the brain does not constitute the soul of man, I have demonstrated in one of my former discussions. The modern monist's failure in this respect lies in the untenability of his own arguments.* However, it is not the monistic views that I have to combat now. This I have elaborated upon in the discourse mentioned. My present object is to explain what I mean by the continuity of individual life. Now, then, we find that while the man of today is physically identical with the man of the past—except in some minor respects relative to the forms of certain portions of his body, like the length of his arms and the shape of his cranium—he differs from his ancestors only by virtue of his intellectual attainments. This being the case, the question arises by what means or methods the present man comes into possession of his attainments. The only tenable answer to this query would be that he comes into possession of his mental resources only through a series of experiences. In other words, the sum total of his experiences constitutes his attainments. While this is quite correct, the further question arises—when does he acquire these experiences? If it is in one of his physical lives, the period is too short to deserve any consideration. To this we will hear the answer that experience is not necessarily to be acquired by every individual; one

* See chapter vii of "The Searchers."

profits by the experiences of others by learning. Perfectly correct. However, a diligent observation discloses the fact that the amount of experiences already accumulated is not accessible to the understanding of every individual in equal degree. One learns a great deal by hearing or reading, while another spends all his life in learning and learns nothing. Why should these accumulated experiences of men be more accessible to one than to the other? To illustrate: There are two brothers, children of the same parents. From the day of their birth they are cared for alike. They dress alike, are nourished alike, and we might say they breathe the same air. Furthermore, they are given the same opportunities in the pursuit of their education. This education offers to both of them with equal generosity the accumulated experiences of men of the past and present relative to different objects with which they come in contact during their mature lives. Yet while one profitably utilizes this acquired knowledge, the other remains as helpless as the man who never had opportunities similar to his. Illustrations like this, which call for mature consideration on our part, are too numerous to remain unobserved. Thus it becomes evident that neither skeleton nor the formation of the brain nor yet learning, constitutes the source of the intellectual attainment the modern man possesses today. Now let us consider another side of the problem in hand. That man existed three hundred thousand years ago, we learn from scientific researches. That the man of that type does not exist today we know by our own observations. What became of him, would be only a natural question to ask. He is extinct, is the positive answer. That not only he and his immediate progeny, but a long

series of improved generations that followed him during the long period of the Anthropozoic age have totally disappeared from this earth, is the statement of men of science. How are we to understand this? If by extinction they wish to convey the idea that he does not exist any more because he was destroyed, annihilated, the opinion is grievously erroneous. There is nothing on this earth that can be destroyed or annihilated. Neither matter nor force can be destroyed. The mutability of forms, a law which is in constant operation, is not an act of destruction by any means. On the contrary, the process by which changes are effected in ever increasing numbers of forms, is the only constructive power in nature. Owing to this, all things that existed one hundred million years ago exist today. This being the case, can we admit that the man who is a part and parcel of the earth is an exception to this rule? Should we admit this, we would have to reject the solid experimental knowledge which teaches that there is nothing, absolutely nothing, new on this earth. This we cannot do without contradicting the laws of nature, for such an alternative necessarily would suggest that the modern man is a new comer to this planet, which is absurd. On the other hand, this fact alone, that man exists today—does it not prove convincingly that he existed before? Had the primitive man not existed, would the modern man exist? Certainly not. It follows that if this is true, equally true must be the fact that only the man who had experiences in the past can attain the development of the man of today, which is equivalent to the fact that the man of today is the identical man of the past. Only an improved apple seed can produce an improved apple tree. However, in or-

der to have an improved apple seed, it must undergo numerous changes for its betterment before it can attain its improved standard. So it is with man. His improvement must come through a long series of experiences before he becomes the happy possessor of the attainments of the man of today. Were the man of today at the beginning of his existence, he would not be any different from the man of three hundred thousand years ago, when, after his long series of transformations, he appeared for the first time in his crude garb of the then existing human form. Nothing comes out of nothing. Our intelligence is the result and sum total of the experiences we acquired during the long period of the Anthropozoic age,—hence the unavoidable conclusion, that had I not lived and had I not acquired experiences during that period, I could not be what I am today. This is, my dear doctor, what I mean by the law of continuity of every individual life. We have lived before, we live now, and we shall and must live in the future. No power can destroy us. What was our beginning, if beginning there was, and what will be our end, if there be an end, is a matter we cannot conceive with our present attainments. Our immediate duty is to study and know the laws which govern us now. It is futile,—nay, radically hopeless is the effort tending to fathom things not accessible to our understanding. Yet it is this very thing that theologians undertake to do. They start with God, whom they know not, as the cause of causes, and tell of the effects. How inconsistent this is you can perceive when you consider that an imaginary cause must necessarily produce an imaginary effect. That the God of the theologians is the imaginary cause we know from the fact that He is the

identical God of the old Jews, who in His turn is the perfect picture of a type of man, who blesses and curses with equal magnanimity, and for whom the children of Israel are better than the rest of mankind, simply because He Himself is a creation of the Jew. He is permeated with humiliating human passions and bias, which indicates His human origin, for He orders massacres and destruction of all and every one inimical to the interests of His chosen Jewish people. All His attention, intelligence, and solicitude are centered in that little area of land where the Jews lived and fought each other. He knows only those neighboring nations whom the Jews know. He knows absolutely nothing of the nations whom the Jews know not. There is nothing to indicate that Jehovah knew of the people living on the other half of the earth. He knew only things which the Jews knew. His inconsistency in the set of rulings He imposes upon His people, is very marked in more ways than one; for while He commands 'thou shalt not kill,' He Himself commits more killing than all men taken together. You have expressed yourself sufficiently clearly to make me conclude that such is not the God you worship. However, while you have the courage of your conviction, the rest of the theologians continue to preach the name of Jehovah. Such being the starting point of theological doctrines, how can you expect them to be in harmony with the laws of nature? The God presented by the Jews, being the outcome of the crude conceptions of their barbarous ancestors, decidedly is not the standard of sublimity which can appeal to the advanced man of today. Hence the whole structure of theological doctrines reduces itself to a level

which remains hopelessly in contradiction with real truths. The language I am using in this connection might not be pleasing to those accustomed to Judaic poetry. But I am certain it is not any more displeasing than it would have been to the advanced men of old Athens, were they told that the gods they and their progressive neighbors, the Romans, worshipped piously and devotedly, were a mere invention of the poetical fancy of Homer. Hesiod and Homer were the men who framed theogony for the Greeks, gave names to the gods, assigned to them honors and arts and declared their several forms, says Herodotus, the father of history.

“One word more, my dear doctor. To claim that we know all, would be as inconsistent as to assert that we know nothing. The very fact that we know that our knowledge grows gradually as we grow in experience, is more than knowing nothing. Owing to this order of things, we may be mistaken in our estimation of facts we take for our consideration. Our scientific methods also may be defective when compared with what they may be in the future. Nevertheless, for the time being, and so long as we have no better sources from which to derive our knowledge, we are reasonably justified in taking the stand we do. Nay, considering the importance and necessity of knowledge, it is our duty to accept what scientific methods and facts we have today for our *ultima ratio*. Science is the sum total of accumulated facts verifiable at any time and accessible to our senses. Poetry, while in many cases conveying truths, in most cases is only fancy. When Homer wrote his ‘Iliad,’ about eight hundred and fifty years B. C., he little thought that

distant generations would be quoting his sayings as standard truths. The practices of nineteen hundred years have fully demonstrated that the Jewish poetry written more or less about the same time is not an exception to this rule. It is safe to conclude that the ultimate fate of the Olympian gods will be that of the Jewish god, for both are products of the poetical fancies of the age in which they were originated.

"Returning to my subject, allow me to state that while the deductive method of reasoning has its merit in matters of grosser forms, the inductive method is the safest in matters of finer qualities. From effect to cause, and not from cause to effect, is the cry of the day. We are grown to that stage of development which does not permit us longer to deal with fancies when we are in search of truths. We must have facts and only facts to learn things worth learning. It is this method of reasoning which leads us to the inevitable conclusion that the continuity of the individual life is as great a truth as that of cause and effect."

The prolonged silence which followed Count Morat's last words was interrupted by the appearance of his faithful servant, Yonan, the Chaldean.

"Master," said he respectfully, "luncheon is served."

CHAPTER X

FINAL CONCLUSIONS

Several years elapsed. Dr. Stuart and his genial friends, prompted by ever increasing interest in matters pertaining to human life, met frequently and discussed problems of vital interest to them. In the meantime, the reverend rector whose intellectual growth is faithfully portrayed on these pages, entered a new phasis of mental process which was bound to produce a decisive change in his attitude, and which finally reached its zenith at about this time, for we find him living in a private cottage on West Adams Heights, where he had recently installed himself. The most vital episode in his career is best related by himself in the following letter which he wrote to his bosom friend, in which he tells his own story:

"Faithful to my promise, my dear Howard, I write this at my new abode, to give you a full account of my conduct, which culminated in my resignation and final retirement from the ministry. I am no longer a rector of an Anglican parish. What is more important, I am no longer a priest after the order of Melchizedek. Oh, dear, dear, how amusing it now sounds to me, this *order of Melchizedek*. How puerile, nay, how ludicrous is the desire of modern man to be what old Melchizedek was or could have been. Yet this is only one of the many futile aspirations that animate the life of an Anglican priest, or any other regularly ordained priest for that matter.

"Do I feel happy? Yes, indeed. If you knew of the peace and contentment this step on my part brought me, you would rejoice with me, I am sure. From that memorable day when my dormant thinking faculties were aroused to activity, to the day of my resignation, my life has been a series of incessant struggles. It was a struggle of which I know no parallel, and which can be understood only by one who has had a similar experience. To struggle with adversities in everyday life and with a host of bitter opponents in an open field, is only play compared with the struggle waged against yourself and within yourself. One may deceive and mislead others, but he cannot deceive himself if he is earnest in the researches he undertakes. However, following others, you might say—why should a priest undertake any researches at all? Why should he think at all? He is not expected to think for himself. His duty is to obey the church and teach its doctrines, no matter how inconsistent they may appear to him. This is exactly what I did the last twenty-five years of my life. But, alas, it had to come to an end; for it became a physical impossibility to continue a life which, while outwardly was all that the church required, inwardly was unbearable torture. It was too strenuous an effort to teach what I had ceased to believe in, and practice a set of rituals which no longer had a meaning for me.

"During one of my discussions with you, while you were in our city, if you remember, I told you the story of an old coat, which, while I was deeply convinced of its uselessness, I would not disturb in its time honored use until I had another and far better one to offer in its place. Today, I am happy to be able to say, the

coat I have searched for all these long and tedious years has finally assumed a form that is admirably suited for the purpose.

“Looking backward in the history of mankind as far as we can go in the mist of the long forgotten past, we are strongly impressed with a phenomenon of mighty potency. We see man growing through ages and ages, as a child grows from helpless infancy to mature age. Omitting the so-called prehistoric times—an epoch which, much as it is explored, still leaves a great deal to be speculated upon—should we take into consideration only the last three thousand years, we are bound to see the traces of this marvellous growth of man so markedly as to feel entirely absolved from the obligation for an argument to the effect that man has been growing in the past, is rapidly growing today, and must grow in the future. What I mean particularly by this growth is the development of his various mental faculties. The question whether these faculties are developed or acquired by man is a matter for special study, which calls for mature consideration. However, for the moment I will not discuss this intensely interesting subject, my object being the general outline of the growth of man and its causes.

“When we consider the marvellous progress in the field of discoveries made by man in the last one hundred years, we ask why it is that these discoveries were not made earlier. Steam, electricity, and ethereal waves existed in nature for millions of years, yet the primitive man knew nothing of them, nay, even the advanced Jewish prophets, who claimed to know much about heavenly affairs, knew absolutely nothing of the potency and possibilities represented by

the elements surrounding them. They lived on the very planet where we are living now; they were in contact with the same elements which constitute our world, yet they knew practically nothing of the forces of nature which make our age what it is. Solomon, the wisest of the Jews, nay, even the more advanced Solon, the Athenian lawgiver of the prosperous age of the Greeks, would have classed them among illusions of idiotic imaginings had anyone told them of our telegraphs, telephones, steamships, railroads, cinematographs, and lastly our aerial navigation. Nay, our own grandfathers would have taken as a huge joke at the expense of our English cousins the mere suggestion of the possibility of a Frenchman flying over the channel and landing on the nook-shotten Isle of Albion in safety. The inquiry, then, why primitive man and the generations that followed him for many ages knew nothing of what we know today, is entirely legitimate. In order to answer this, it is sufficient to review intelligently the process of the gradual growth of man, which unmistakably suggests that it was absolutely necessary for him to grow to a certain stage in his attainments in order to be able to detect the latent forces of nature. The process in question can be likened to an interminable ladder, the lower end of which is lost in the dark ages of the past, and the upper one in the impenetrable future. We see only a small portion of it. On this ladder man is placed. His destiny is to ascend it step by step, tending towards his goal, his growth. The stupendous law which governs this is as firm as it is everlasting. In conformity with this law, man has been gradually emerging from his primitive stages during hundreds

of thousands of years in the past, and he will continue to do so in the future. He must grow on and on to infinity. Nothing can stop him.

"Now the question arises, what is that immediate cause which forces man to crawl up the ladder of his progression so persistently? To say that there is a law which governs this would amount to nothing, should we be deprived of an argument more accessible to our senses. If we know that man is growing, we also must know the process which makes him grow. The only tenable answer to this query is that the power which forces him forward is his destiny, and the process by which he accomplishes this, a series of interminable experiences which he gradually acquires and which constitute his knowledge. His experiences of the past have brought him to his present stage, and those of the present will advance him to stages unknown and as yet unthinkable to him. That this is a fact observable by any man who possesses the power of discernment, needs no argument. Should anyone, however, wish to ascertain the veracity of this statement, he is bound to find ample corroborative facts to this effect should he examine his own personal growth. In doing this, he will readily discover that the only power which makes him grow is the experimental knowledge he acquires in the whirlpool of his acts. Neither poetry nor fancy; neither speculative philosophy nor positive theology, can add a minimal part of an inch to his growth. Whether he knows this or not, whether he wishes it or not, he profits only by experience. Hence we are forced to conclude that the only proper and profitable source of knowledge for man to cultivate is experimental knowledge. Owing to this, any and all

theories and doctrines which are not based upon empirical truths, that is to say, upon truths detected by experimental knowledge, demonstrated and demonstrable, are decidedly useless, nay, they are harmful, inasmuch as they do not furnish proper material for the growth of man. It is time we should distinguish and divorce fact from fiction, and particularly knowledge from belief.

"The more I think, the clearer I see the vital importance of individual growth. What is this magical power which forces one to think and analyze? We often hear of an analytical mind. But have you ever thought what this analytical mind is, or rather, to be more precise, what it is that makes a mind analytical? Is it fancy or simply caprice? There are men, even among the cultured, who feel perfectly happy in submitting themselves to the opinions imposed by others; while there are others, although less in number, who rebel against all and every opinion to which they cannot accord their spontaneous assent. I said spontaneous assent, but I am wrong; due assent would be better, for spontaneity conveys the idea of a causeless impulse in the performance of a given act, while there is no act which is not prompted by its legitimate cause. It follows that the acceptance or rejection of an opinion is regulated, not by mere fancy, but by that magical something which is more potent than fancy or caprice and which makes a mind analytical, and this magical something is simply the accumulated knowledge at a given time, in a given person. What is more important, owing to the continual increase of knowledge, this state of mind is not and cannot be stationary. It changes as rapidly as the man progresses in the ac-

quirement of more knowledge. It is due solely to the increase of knowledge that opinions are changed. The doctrine which insists that we should remain faithful to the conceptions of our ancestry is radically erroneous and utterly inadmissible, inasmuch as it is contrary to the laws of nature. The great and inexorable law which makes us grow, forces us to see things in a new light, in conformity with the experimental knowledge we gradually acquire as we progress. We cannot go against this law, try as we may. Owing to this, no matter how great a truth may appear to be, it never can appeal to all men alike, and at all times. This we know from the fact that what was a truth, a great and undeniable truth, in the past, is not so today. Each individual is bound to have his personal opinion on the subject submitted to his scrutiny. Why? Simply because his acceptance or rejection of it is forced upon him by the dictatorial power of the reasoning he possesses at a given time, and which denotes his personal growth. It follows that the changes of opinions are not fancies. They are as legitimate an outcome of the existing order as that which takes place in the opinions of a mature man when compared with those he had in his childhood. No man can prevent or suppress his intellectual growth any more than he can check his physical one.

"There was a time when I could not see this order of things; hence the origin of my struggles. It was only lately that I began to realize how little I knew of the real conditions which make us what we are. This was due to my theological training. It may seem singular, but the fact is that Christian theology has absolutely nothing to do with reality. This is for the

simple reason that the method employed by it is radically erroneous, inasmuch as it starts its premises from the cause of causes, which it knows not, and explains the effects. Owing to this, in every step that a theologian makes, he is forced to see facts in a light suitable to the theories he has, and the result is that the whole theological skeleton becomes an artificial structure which has nothing whatever in common with real facts. Because God is omnipotent, He can suppress the laws of nature and perform miracles. Because He is omnipotent, He can predict coming events through the Jewish prophets. Which is equivalent to saying that because God is omnipotent, He must be deficient, for only His deficiency can be cause for the suppression of an order once established by Himself. And, again, because God is omniscient, He must be an unknown quantity to men without the assistance of His revelations. Such is the outcome of the logic which pervades the structure of theology. Finally, when we ask why only through the Jewish prophets is God to be known, the answer which a theologian offers discloses the shallowness of the fundamental doctrine so tangibly as to make an argument impossible without the assistance of our hereditary Shintoism.

"Knowing as you do my long struggle, you are entitled to know my final conclusions also, which today constitute my firm and unalterable convictions.

"All conceptions concerning the Supreme Being, known and professed by mankind, are absolutely human. These conceptions, whether originated by Moses for the edification of the Jews, or by Homer for the ancient Greeks, or by Mahomet for the Moslems, or finally, by any other of the great number of religious

reformers, reflect only the limitations of their originators. While the desire to know the Maker of all is highly commendable, the realization of it is utterly unattainable. This happens, as I said before, for the simple reason that the human intellect, being finite, cannot conceive the Infinite. We may and can know many causes by their effects, but to know the Cause of all causes, we must first cease to be the effect. We are only effects of causes. The Jewish God is only a clumsy Jewish myth. Is there a power behind all that mechanism which we term the universe? Should we follow the workings of the law of cause and effect, we are bound to admit that there is a cause to all causes, which is the Absolute. Aside from admitting this, it would be mere folly to say anything more. We do not and decidedly cannot know the Absolute. Absolute begins where we end our thinking. No matter how refined our reasoning, no matter how deep below we may plunge or how high above we may soar, with our present intellectual attainment we cannot understand the Absolute. No human being can. Those who claim to know the Absolute, either knowingly or unknowingly, are deceiving themselves and misleading others. One may as well try to put the Pacific Ocean in the hollow of his hand or pack Mount Washington in a nutshell. How much less can the finite know the Infinite!

"There was a time when our race knew nothing of the distant heavenly bodies. Nay, it knew very little of the earth it inhabited. Pliny, the most learned Roman of the most learned age of Rome, speaking of the dimensions of the several parts of the earth, makes the following statement:

“‘Europe,’ he says, ‘appears to be greater than Asia by a little less than a half of Asia, and greater than Africa by the same quantity added to the sixth part of Africa. Europe is a third part of the whole earth, with the addition of a little more than one eighth. Asia is a fourth, plus a fourteenth; and Africa a sixth plus a sixtieth.’

“Such was the information which the most erudite Roman imparted less than two thousand years ago. Today, any schoolboy knows a great deal more about our planet than the most learned of Romans, and the learned of our day know still more, for our astronomers are well posted about the distant planets of our solar system. Yet with all our learning today, what do we know of the myriads of solar systems we see in the blue of the skies? Absolutely nothing. Now if we know so little of the knowable (for, after all, what we see is evidently susceptible to our senses, therefore it must be knowable), is it not mere folly to assert that we know the Unknowable, the Unthinkable, the Absolute? Why are we trying to know an entity—if an entity the Absolute can be—which quite passes our understanding, while we are conscious of our inability to know even a minimal part of the effects emanated from the cause of all causes. Theology teaches we should know the Absolute in order to know His will. How inconsistent this is we can see from the fact that the Absolute has not and decidedly cannot have a will. I see your expression of surprise and astonishment at this assertion. Yet should you stop to think, you cannot refuse to agree with me when you consider that a will, as we know the will to be, is only an effect of a cause, or causes, as the case may be.

The Absolute, being the cause of all causes, cannot be governed by any imaginable causes. It follows that the Absolute cannot have a will. The free volition of the Absolute, which owing to our limitations we cannot comprehend, cannot be termed a will. We have no name for it, simply because we cannot comprehend it. This being the case, the motive as to why we should know the Absolute is as untenable as the understanding of the Absolute is unattainable.

"Thus, having pointed out the impossibility of knowing God, I hear you say—what shall we do with the masses for whom God is the only giver of laws by which they are to regulate their lives? The masses are like children. They must be taught good behavior. They are not philosophers. They know nothing of the reasoning you are advocating. They must have precepts in the concrete form in order to regulate their daily conduct. They must be told not to kill; not to commit adultery; not to steal; not to bear false witness against their neighbors; not to covet their neighbor's house, wife, manservant, maidservant, ox, ass, nor anything else that is their neighbor's. These precepts are beneficial, therefore most necessary for the welfare of individuals as well as communities. Should we say that the Jewish God, to whom these commandments are ascribed, is a myth, by what authority can we enforce these precepts so inevitable for the maintenance of order and peace among men?

"Hearing the above questions, one might think that we are really facing an unsolvable dilemma. Yet this is not the case. It is true this very problem time and again has imposed silence upon many a distinguished thinker of today. We find something analogous in

the history of the ancient Greeks. Herodotus well knew it was Homer who made the Olympian gods. Was it not for this very reason that Plato never hesitated to display his dislike for Homer? At any rate, not only did he ridicule the poetical fancy of the author of the *Iliad*, but he industriously pointed out the uselessness of the labors of all poets. This he did, prompted by his deeply rooted conviction that the fiction for the most part constituting the themes of all poets, while it gave nothing practically useful to men, was misleading and dangerous. That Plato was not mistaken in this we now can see clearly when we consider how eagerly the fictitious sayings of Homer were quoted as truths by the generations that followed him. Socrates, in his turn, decidedly does not believe in the gods of his ancestors. He is publicly accused of teaching doctrines contrary to the traditional belief of the Greeks, for which ultimately he pays the penalty of death. And yet, neither Herodotus, nor Plato, nor yet Socrates the sage, will speak openly their minds on this subject. On the contrary, these distinguished thinkers in their public utterances speak with deference and reverently of the mythical gods of the people they address. Was it false modesty or miscalculated prudence that guided these men to act as they did? Or was it simply their pusillanimity that prevented them from going against the many who upheld popular belief? If anything, it was certainly their inability to provide a substitute for that poetical portion of mythology which made pantheism attractive. Socrates and his faithful disciple, Plato, are in accord in firmly believing that man's only and greatest happiness consists in the acquirement of knowledge,—not belief, but dis-

tinctly a knowledge that is empirical—that is to say, experimental. This being the case, and knowing as they did that the belief in the ancient gods was not a demonstrable knowledge, therefore not empirical, did they not contradict themselves in advocating, though silently, the worship of the Olympian gods? Certainly they were playing a false game inasmuch as they did not reject mythology entirely and boldly. However, considering their times, and the fact that they were dealing with men whose intellectual growth would not permit, without detrimental results, the elimination of the established ancestral cult, they were justified in keeping silence on the subject as they did.

“This very complication arises in our day. The majority of thinking people of today, including the thinking clergy, know well that the Jewish religious poetry, clumsy as it is, has no more merit nor more significance than that attributed by the ancients to the religious poetry of the Greeks and Romans. Yet they dare not say so for the very reason which forbade the Grecian thinkers to say openly that the Olympian gods were a mere fiction originated by the poets and enforced by the priesthood—forgetful of the fact that the men of today vastly differ from the men of twenty-five hundred years ago. However, difficult as the solution of this important problem appears to be, should we be guided by rational judgment, nothing is simpler than the rejection of the useless. For after all, are we not after that which is beneficial to us? No sane man will deny that the conceptions of good and evil we have today are the outcome of our growth. They are ours for they are our products. Why, then, should we not uphold them for their own merit without

investing them with the miraculous and marvellous of mythical origin? Why should we not advocate the good for goodness' sake alone? We know what is good and what is bad for us, and this we know empirically. In other words, we have learned by our own experience what is good and profitable and what is bad and detrimental to us. Let us, therefore, practice and teach what we know to be good and avoid and dissuade others from doing what is evil. Do you not think this one reason, that we know and believe that the principles of morality in essentials such as they are known to us are necessary for us, is sufficient for their enforcement? Why, then, should we not advocate the good without the mythical story attached to it? You must have an authority for what you teach, you say. The fact that you know by experimental knowledge that a set of ethical principles now in force is beneficial to mankind—is that not sufficient authority for you to maintain and propagate it? Should you insist upon having a scientific ruling to that effect, turn your mind to the all pervading and all powerful law of cause and effect. Practice and teach what you know to be knowable and demonstrable. The law of causality, the only governing power in all things, is knowable and demonstrable. Do not teach what you do not know empirically. Do not teach falsehood. A myth is a fancy. Should you present it as truth, no matter what your motives, you are practicing falsehood and teaching falsehood. The only ground upon which you can build all virtue is honesty. Before you can make your followers virtuous and good, you must have them honest. It is, therefore, with honesty that you must start your work for the propagation of morality. However, in order

to teach others efficiently, you must be honest yourself. But you cannot be honest if you insist upon your followers accepting mythical stories for truths. The Jewish lore, being divine revelation, is nothing but a pure and simple myth. The originators of it, as well as their followers, may have been honest as long as they did not know that it was human growth which suggested the ruling principles involved and not any super-human agency. But those who know that all there is in the possession of man is human, are playing a false game, a seductive game, in propagating the Jewish myths as truths. A fancy, even be it of a religious nature, remains only a fancy. But this fancy becomes an appalling crime when men, governed by their selfishness, clothe it with divine authority and use it to their advantage. The Jewish God is a tool in the hands of usurpers. They make Him say what they want to say. Jehovah is decidedly a commercial agent; so are those who advocate His cause. He wants ten percent. of all the possessions of men. In olden times, He wanted oxen, sheep, doves, silver, and gold. Today He wants only silver and gold. The salvation of souls today largely depends upon the amount of currency they can offer to the altars of God. The clergy of today, as of the past, insist that the faithful be practical Christians, which is measured by the offerings they make. Yes, indeed, a clergyman is as much entitled to his pay as any other man who performs a certain amount of work. But while labor is entitled to a stated remuneration in the commercial world, that remuneration is based upon reciprocal benefits. It is different in the church. Here Jehovah demands His dues. He insists, He commands, that ten percent. of

all the riches of the world be given to the priesthood in order to glorify His name.

"Jewish history has outlived its purpose. It is a pity to see our children in Sunday-school memorizing passages from it. What good do they learn from the fact that over two thousand years ago there was a barbarian race living in Asiatic Turkey, now dispersed all over the world, which distinguished itself by butchering each other, massacring neighboring nations without mercy, and committing unspeakable and abominable crimes. There were other nations on the earth at the same time. India was peopled with a race that was much more advanced in every respect than the Jews were. The basic laws of Rome, which constitute the foundation of our present jurisprudence, were copied almost literally from those of India. If the Hindoos of today do not represent the standard to be followed, the Jews have the distinction of being a people without country or name. Why do we not teach our children the traditions and moral precepts of other nations? Why this preference for the Jews? Why should we think and act as they did in the dark ages? Why should we, the children of an advanced race, be forced to look through a pair of spectacles made for the use of the old Jews? Why should the record of their bloody crimes and shameful deeds constitute the indispensable ornament of our homes? Why should such a humiliating attitude be assigned to us? It is high time every honest thinker put these questions to himself. However, should anyone look for a tenable answer to these queries, he is bound to find it in the fact that we irrationally love our Shintoism and blindly follow the practices of our ancestors. It is against this

practice, forced upon us by our thoughtlessness, that my soul rebels. It is against the imposition of ancestral mistakes on one hand and against the usurpers of confidence of the masses on the other that the cry of the modern man is directed.

“For the love of honesty, teach and propagate only truth not as the old Jews saw it; not as you, whether an individual or an organization see it; but as it is suggested by the laws of nature and is applicable to all men and all nations alike. The only method which will not fail to accomplish this is to adhere solely to the truths dictated by empirical knowledge. Let science be the point of departure. In other words, let experimental knowledge be the guiding element in all our search for truth. If science is not adequately equipped to dictate ethical principles, instead of devoting much valuable time and labor to useless Judaic lore, let every man interested in the welfare of mankind explore the great law of cause and effect. There you will find ample material to build a structure of moral principles which will be as durable and efficient as the gradual growth of man requires. Only on this ground can you boldly face any man, whether he be a humble simpleton or a distinguished philosopher, and say that it is the inexorable law of causality put in motion by his choice that makes him happy or unhappy. If he knows this and follows what it teaches, he will avoid an evil deed. He will avoid any deed devoid of harmony and peace. Should he not do this, he will suffer the consequences that follow, for his evil deeds must and will bring him evil. If anyone, it is he himself that is bound to suffer most from the causes set in motion by his evil thoughts, evil words and deeds.

On the other hand, should he live in harmony with his better self, in harmony with his fellowmen, in charity to all and malice to none, he will set in motion causes that are harmonious, which will not fail to bring unto him all that might constitute his supreme happiness.

"A mother teaches her child not to put its little finger in the fire, for it will burn. Should the child disobey, it soon will learn by its own experience the truth taught by the mother. So with every man who ignores the workings of cause and effect, for this is a law as powerful as it is everlasting, which governs the deeds of all men alike, whether young or old, ignorant or wise. There is no human act, no matter how insignificant, which is not governed by this very law. Ah, a world of thoughts crowds my poor head as I write these lines.

"To tell you all I wish you to know will take more time and space than that allotted to a letter. However, I have stated in brief my present views and convictions. To teach and propagate these principles is the only aim and object of my life; to it I will devote the rest of my days. While I respect the memory of my ancestors, I cherish fondly my own convictions, which I have acquired during long and tedious years of contemplation and experience.

"Farewell."

At about this time there appeared an article in the press to the effect that the former pastor, the Reverend William Stuart, D.D., whose unexpected resignation caused great commotion and regret in local ecclesiastical circles, was about to organize a new congregation, mostly of the members of his former parish, and that